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First Nations Students: What Some Teachers Do
That Make Them Successful

Dissertation

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April, 2001

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Abstract

With the European settlement of North America, the education of First Nations children shifted from being carried out in a natural setting by all community members, communicated through observation and trial, and instructed through values, needs, and traditions; to a whole-group learning model founded on a standard curriculum based on successes and failures. For at least the past fifty years First Nations adults have demanded greater control over their children's education. Recently, the Ministry of Education in British Columbia (BC) has advocated for greater success of First Nations students by providing funding for additional support and by increasing the number of First Nations language and cultural programs. Even though the First Nations community and BC politicians want First Nations students to have more success, research illustrates that First Nations students continue to struggle academically. Yet, although research indicates that the person having the greatest impact on student success is the classroom teacher, very little research exists examining teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students.

This qualitative study focused on the beliefs and the teaching techniques of six teachers who worked successfully with First Nations students. The teachers were interviewed using Haberman's *Star Teacher Selection Interview*. Teacher constructs related to the success of First Nations students are arranged into four key attributes: building relationships, the teaching of morality, classroom pedagogy, and teacher preparation. Teachers who work successfully with First Nations students need to build relationships by being cognizant of the environment that both they and their students bring to the classroom; understanding, appreciating, and valuing these students; and integrating First Nations beliefs into the curriculum. They need to view

morality as a quality that goes beyond the four classroom walls and be proactive in promoting a holistic approach to nurturing morality. They need to maintain a classroom environment that is safe, friendly, predictable, and consistent. While none of the teachers in this study participated in teaching practicums which required them to work in a First Nations community, they all worked with a minority culture early in their careers that assisted in shaping their beliefs about working with First Nations students. In addition, teachers who work successfully with First Nations students need to be persistent in solving seemingly unending problems and protecting their students from the educational system's bureaucracy.

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A sincere thanks goes to:

Paw and Maw Peacock whose 'star' qualities as parents make me who I am today.

The First Nations people and the community of Kitwanga, BC for teaching me how to appreciate cultural differences.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to Debi Russell, whose love and support made this dream come true.

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Chapter One: The Problem

Statement of the Problem

The educational success of First Nations students in the schools of British Columbia is an ever-increasing concern for all stakeholders. No where does this concern have a greater significance than with the province's First Nations community and the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MoEST) (D. Avison, personal communication, fall 1997; Ministry of Education, 1998).

The traditional First Nations method of educating children recognizes that education is

the responsibility of everyone. The parents, the grandparents, the aunts and uncles, cousins, Chiefs and counselors, everyone had a personal commitment to ensure that the individual was as well informed as possible so that the survival of the community was guaranteed. No one looked at this as an obligation that had to be met, but as an exercise that they were happy to be a part of -- because truly in the success of the child comes the success of the community. (Kavanagh, 1997, p. 1)

Traditionally, the education of First Nations children is to be carried out by all community members in the most natural setting possible, communicated through observations and trial, and instructed through values, needs, and traditions (Russell, 1993). This method supports the view that "each and every member of our [the First Nations] community [including the extended family], as well as the school system, are the teachers" (Kavanagh, 1997, p.1). This

community system of educating children continued even after the arrival of the first non-First Nations settlers.

However, Kavanagh (1997) indicated that by the mid-19th century some First Nations parents began to voluntarily place their children in public schools. The signing of the British North America Act in 1867 dramatically impacted this trend. With the signing of this Act, the nation of Canada was created and authority over the First Nations people was officially given to the federal government. The Indian Act, signed in 1876, further specified the control that the federal government had over the First Nations people, including their education. In 1879, as a means of educating First Nations children, the Canadian federal government created large residential schools which were modeled after those established in the United States. While at these residential schools, First Nations students were not allowed to speak their language, practice their customs, learn their culture, or grow their hair long. The dismantling of the traditional First Nations educational system had clearly begun (Wilson & Martin, 1997).

By 1900, this segregated residential education system enrolled over half of the First Nations children (Kavanagh, 1997, p. 17). It was not until a review of the Federal Indian Act, in 1946, by a Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons that First Nations people actively advocated for greater control over the education of their children. As a consequence, all significant reports on the education of First Nations children in British Columbia have asked for “a transfer of control of education programs for First Nations learners to First Nations themselves” (Kavanagh, 1997, p. 12). As a result of these demands, the jurisdiction for the education of First Nations children became split. The Canadian Constitution transferred control of the education of all students to the

provinces while the Indian Act still empowered the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs of Canada with the responsibility of educating First Nations children living on reserve land.

Being responsible for the education of all students, regardless of their race, sex, religion, and ethnicity, the British Columbia Ministry of Education, Skills and Training's mission statement indicates that their educational mandate is to provide leadership and support for an education and training system that provides all British Columbians with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge to live productive and fulfilling lives and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life of the province. (MoEST, 1998, p. 1)

In 1998, to improve the educational success rate of its First Nations learners, MoEST implemented three types of programs: First Nations Cultural Awareness, to develop in all students "an understanding and appreciation of the history, culture, traditions and issues" (p. 108) of local First Nations peoples; First Nations Language Program, to provide all students with "the opportunity to develop comprehension and fluency" (p. 108) in a First Nations language; and First Nations Support Services, to provide First Nations students "requiring additional support to succeed in school, [with] such [services] as counseling, monitoring of attendance and homework, and home-school liaison services" (p. 108).

In reality, however, the academic achievements of the First Nations students, in the province of British Columbia, continue to be much lower than that of their non-First Nations counterparts (MoEST, 1998, p. 27). The reasons for this lower achievement appear to be similar to those of at-risk students in urban

communities throughout North America. First Nations students are frequently poor, educationally challenged, language delayed, or handicapped in other ways. Wilson and Martin (1997) discovered that issues of physical and sexual abuse, and the breakdown of relationships with their families and communities have led to an unhealthy home life for many First Nations students. "When people turn to substance abuse to mask their pain and anger, home becomes unhealthy. Children in such homes can easily become alienated especially when they believe that both their homes and their schools seem indifferent to their needs" (p. 14). Despite a host of reform efforts, schools are not often meeting the needs of large numbers of First Nations students.

Although improvement in the educational performance of First Nations students is a goal for both the First Nations community and the Ministry, no research exists that supports the concept that programs implemented at the Ministry level result in improved student performance. However, research does exist to support that the greatest impact on student success is what the teacher does in the classroom (e.g., Evans, 1996; Gilliland, 1995; Grant, 1989; Haberman, 1995c). MoEST (1998) states that "it is at the level of classroom instruction that the influence on children's education is greatest" (p. 42). It is at the classroom level that the most crucial interactions take place: those between the teacher and the students. Yet, in regards to First Nations students, little is known about what teachers do within their classrooms that contributes to these students being successful. To better understand how teachers work successfully with First Nations students, there is a need to research what is happening in the classrooms, and then, to make those discoveries an integral part of a plan aimed at increasing the educational success of First Nations students.

While limited literature exists that specifically looks at the attributes, or characteristics and practices, of teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students, literature does exist that outlines important teacher ingredients for the successful education of other minority groups. Much is contributed by Dr. Martin Haberman whose extensive studies on successful teachers of urban students in poverty have lead to the identification of key indicators for what constitutes “star teachers” in larger urban schools; “teachers who, by all common criteria, are outstandingly successful” (Haberman, 1995c, p. 1). However, little is known about the characteristics and practices of teachers who, against all odds, are successful in assisting First Nations students to learn more, “to act with respect toward themselves and others, and to become happy, successful, contributing citizens” (Haberman, 1995c, p. 2). Hence, this study seeks to identify the characteristics and practices of those teachers who contribute to the educational success of First Nations students.

Background of the Problem

A young First Nations supervisor, when asked about the teaching approach that should be used with First Nations students, replied, “Carefully; First Nations students have experienced enough failure in their lives” (D. Jefferies, personal communication, fall 1996). Previous to the onslaught of the non-First Nations people, the education of the First Nations children was the responsibility of the extended family and the whole community, and was carried out in the most natural setting possible, communicated through observation and trial, and instructed through history and traditions. In the traditional First Nations society, according to Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990), “It was the duty of all adults to serve as teachers for young persons. Child rearing

was not just the province of biological parents but children were nurtured within a larger circle of significant others" (p. 37). The goal of First Nations education, according to Wilson and Martin (1997), was to develop a holistic child by maintaining a balance between the quadrants of intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual competencies. "The key to nurturing and educating First Nations children is the concept of balance within holistic education, 'a balanced integration.' Many discussions of First Nations education use the medicine wheel as a device for keeping the balance" (p. 11). To the First Nations people, balancing the educational process was a reflection of the larger process of balancing life. Itself.

The traditional First Nations manner of educating their children was disrupted from the 1870's to the 1970's when many First Nations children were forced to attend residential schools. During this time, they were discouraged from maintaining their culture, speaking their language, and practicing their customs. As a result, many of these children lost sight of their heritage, culture, language, and traditions. The abuse suffered by great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents of the present-day First Nations students has, in many cases, set up a cycle of abuse that has damaged the ability of the First Nations people to fulfill their ideal of total community and family involvement in educating their children (Grant, 1995). Traditionally, the First Nations adults believed that the "central purpose of life was the education and empowerment of children . . . [yet] generations of such cultural intrusion have left deep scars of alienation on Indian children and families" (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 35).

Despite these deep scars, First Nations parents have long sought genuine input into the education of their children. Ever since the onset of influence by non-First Nations people over their education, First Nations people have struggled to regain control. The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples found the following:

For more than 25 years, Aboriginal people have been articulating their goals for Aboriginal education. . . . Aboriginal leaders have made policy recommendations to governments, and governments have conducted internal studies. . . . The recommendations, many of them excellent, show remarkable consistency. . . . What we find most disturbing is that issues raised [today] are the same concerns that Aboriginal people have been bringing forward since the first studies were done. . . . we see that there has been progress, but it has unfolded at a snail's pace and falls short of the goal. (Kavanagh, 1997, p. 11)

An important step was taken in 1994: Targeted First Nations educational grants could no longer be spent by a school board without first negotiating a Local Education Agreement (LEA) with each of the local First Nations bands. The LEA addressed such technical issues as discipline procedures, school and band responsibilities, and the establishment of tutoring programs. The introduction of the LEA usually resulted in additional financial support being given to either existing school district programs or to new First Nations community education initiatives through these grants. Congruently, MoEST (1998) implemented a number of programs designed to promote First Nations culture and language into the curriculum for all students. It was thought that by implementing these programs, an appreciation for the First Nations culture would develop, an

improved self-esteem for First Nations students would result, and greater educational success in the public school system would be experienced by First Nations students.

To date, research has shown that such programs have had no significant impact on the educational success of First Nations children. In fact, just the opposite may be true. First of all, evidence to support the success of Ministry programs is lacking; MoEST (1998) states that it does not know the effectiveness of its own First Nations programs (p. 27). Similarly, evidence regarding the educational success of First Nations band-operated schools shows their students are well below the provincially-operated public schools (Cowley & Easton, 1999; Cowley & Easton, 2000; MoEST, 1998, p.32).

However, a review of the literature reveals that there is a wealth of information centered around the importance of the role played by the classroom teacher in the success of all students. An examination of the critical role that teachers play in student success appears to be lacking as both MoEST and the First Nations community wrestle with improving the academic success of First Nations children. Haberman (1995c) has identified key attributes possessed by star teachers of urban children in poverty which allow their students, against all odds, to be successful. In a similar manner, teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students must be studied and their attributes identified. Policy makers need to become cognizant of what teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students do and do not do. This knowledge then needs to be applied to any changes aimed at improving the academic success of First Nations students within the education system of British Columbia. Haberman (1993) emphasized the important role of teachers:

Schools should be built and kept better than banks because there's more wealth in them. But no matter how important the facilities . . . what matters most is the quality of the teachers. . . . almost all of the discourse regarding restructuring and reforming schools over the last decade has emphasized every conceivable form of change and virtually ignored the obvious: getting better teachers. (p. 1)

Purpose of the Study

Haberman (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c) did extensive research on what constitutes a "star" teacher of urban students in poverty. Through his research, Haberman (1995d) was able to identify certain attributes possessed by these star teachers. He further developed a series of interview questions that could be asked to assist in the identification of star teachers of urban students in poverty. According to Haberman (1995c)

'star teachers' [are] teachers who, by all common criteria, are outstandingly successful: their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers. (p. 1)

The purpose of this study is to describe the attributes and classroom practices of teachers who have been identified as being successful in working with First Nations students. By comparing what the research says about what successful classroom teachers do to what teachers who specifically are successful with First Nations students do and say, it is hoped that certain characteristics and

practices will emerge. Following Haberman's research, questions based on these trends and strategies could be developed to assist in the identification of teachers who would be successful in working with First Nations students. This process could then be used to ensure a greater success rate for any initiative aimed at making First Nations students more successful. These initiatives, whether they are MoEST mandated programs or whether they involve greater control by the First Nations community, would then be established based on the concept that the classroom teacher is key to the success of First Nations students and that, following this process, the very best teachers would now be working with the First Nations students.

Importance of the Study

The First Nations community, sensing that the educational performance of their students was below that of non-First Nations children, has long advocated for more control. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood's report, *Indian Control of Indian Education*, called for the transfer of control of education programs for First Nations learners to the First Nations people, themselves. In 1984, the Assembly of First Nations released, *Tradition and Education: Toward a Vision of Our Future*, which once again called for a transfer of jurisdiction of First Nations education to the First Nations people. In 1988, *A Legacy for Learners*, the result of a province-wide investigation of the education system in British Columbia, supported First Nations "self-determination of, or shared responsibility for, the education of their children . . . [and the development of] formal liaison processes to discuss and decide upon the maintenance and improvement of quality services to Native learners" (Kavanagh, 1997, p. 13).

More recently, MoEST, concerned with the academic success of First

Nations students provincially, began to filter out data on First Nations students from that of the general student population. Their findings were released in two MoEST documents, the *1995/96 Annual Report and Data Relating to The Ability of the BC School System to Serve Aboriginal Students: October 1997*. The documents indicate that only thirty-one percent of First Nations students graduate, in comparison to a seventy-one percent graduation rate for non-First Nations students (MoEST, 1998, p. 27). If the student is a First Nations male, his chances of graduating are only twenty-eight percent (MoEST, 1997, p. 5). Between grades ten and twelve, First Nations students have a fifty-one percent dropout rate while non-First Nations students have a twenty-two percent dropout rate. Only three percent of graduating First Nations students go directly into post-secondary institutes, in comparison to thirty-four percent of non-First Nations students (MoEST, 1998, p. 27). First Nations students are likely to be one to three years behind their age appropriate grade. In 1995, in both English 12 and Math 12, non-First Nations students had more A's and B's than First Nations students. (MoEST, 1997, p. 2)

With the changes that the British Columbia government has implemented for First Nations education and with the growing self-control that has been given to the First Nations people over their own education, the educational performance of First Nations students in British Columbia continues to be well below other ethnic groups in the province (MoEST, 1997, p. 7). Of primary importance to this study is the role played by teachers who are successful in working specifically with First Nations students. This study examines the criteria and attributes that generate student success and also explores teacher insights into what teachers do, or do not do, to promote success when working with First

Nations students. These findings can then be applied to such changes as the implementation of new MoEST programs, greater control advocated by First Nations adults, or other initiatives aimed at improving the success of First Nations students.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. What characteristics and practices do teachers, who have been identified as successfully working with First Nations students, exhibit that encourage those students to remain in school, become engaged in educational activities, and promote a desire within the student to learn?
2. Can Haberman's indicators of star urban teachers of children in poverty be used to identify teachers most likely to be successful in working with First Nations students? In addition, are there supplemental indicators for teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students that have not been identified by Haberman's research?

Specific Terminology

Aboriginal People. "A term defined in the *Constitution Act* of 1982 that refers to all indigenous people in Canada, including Indians (status and non-status), Metis, and Inuit people" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.191).

Attributes. "The clusters, chunks, or groups of behaviors that particular practitioners must demonstrate in order to be effective" (Merton, as cited in Haberman, 1995d).

Band. "The legal definition given to distinct groups of Aboriginal clans and families by the *Indian Act*" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia

Ministry of Education, 1998, p.191).

First Nations. "The self-determined political and organizational unit of the Aboriginal community that has the power to negotiate, on a government-to-government basis, with BC and Canada" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.192).

First Nations Students. Students whose ancestry is such that they are reported as First Nations on the British Columbia Ministry of Education's data form, 1701. This information form is used to determine the provincial and federal funding that each school district in British Columbia receives for First Nations students. For this study, the specific bands to which the First Nations students will be associated are the Nlaka'pamux (Thompson) and the Okanagan. However, situated throughout the region, there are a sprinkling of First Nations students from other bands.

Indian. "A term used historically to describe the first inhabitants of North and South America and used to define indigenous people under the *Indian Act*. The term has generally been replaced by Aboriginal people, as defined in the *Constitution Act of 1982*" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.192).

Indian Act. "The principal federal statute dealing with Registered Status Indians or Treaty Indians, local government, and the management of reserve lands and communal monies" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.192).

Self-Government. "The right to govern. This is not the same as sovereignty, but does include the right to administer taxes, pass laws, manage land and natural resources, negotiate with other governments and, in some

instances, take responsibility for education, health, safety, and welfare services for a given community. The extent and application of self-government is negotiated with First Nations and the federal government. There are a number of existing self-government agreements in Canada" (Aboriginal Education Initiative, British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998, p.193).

Star Teachers. "'Star teachers' . . . are outstandingly successful: their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; cooperating universities regard them as superior; and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers" (Haberman, 1995c, p. 1; 1993, p. 1).

Student Success. "Students learn a great deal, act with respect toward themselves and others, and are in the process of becoming happy, successful, contributing citizens" (Haberman, 1995c, p. 2).

Teacher. "Any teacher employed by a school board to provide an education program to students in a school. Teachers must hold a valid certificate of qualification or a letter of permission issued by the BC College of Teachers. Superintendents, assistant superintendents, and administrative officers are not teachers" (MoEST, 1998, p. 113).

Assumptions of the Study

This study assumes that the teachers who were identified, by the school administrators, their colleagues, and school records, as successfully working with First Nations students would also be identified by the parents of the First Nations students. Another assumption is that there is no significant difference between the instructional practices of identified teachers located in the public

school system and those teachers based in band-operated schools. This study further presumes that while inequalities of teaching resources, classroom support, and professional development activities exist, they have no bearing on an individual teacher's ability to work successfully with First Nations students. A final underlying assumption is that teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students exhibit similar qualities regardless of the grade level in which they instruct.

Delimitations of the Study

This study focuses on the data gathered from six teachers, each of whom was identified as working successfully with First Nations students. A requirement for the teacher selection into this study was that their classroom enrollment was to include at least twenty-five percent First Nations students. All six of the teachers worked in either the public school system or a band-operated school. Other than helping to identify the teachers, no data will be collected from the First Nations people, the students, teacher colleagues, university associates, the administrative staff, or any other individuals who are associated with them. Furthermore, this study is restricted to the major First Nations bands, mainly the Nlaka'pamux (Thompson) and the Okanagan, that live in the central region of British Columbia.

The primary data collection methodologies were participant observation and semi-structured open-ended interview questions. The data collected was influenced by the relationship between what was being observed and how the interview questions were answered. Therefore, the data collection process did not remain static but expanded with each new observation and interview answer. However, by involving the participants in checking for accuracy and

remaining rigorously faithful to the data throughout the collection and analysis processes, the validity of this methodology was enhanced.

Limitations of the Study

This study will focus primarily on the bands and on select teachers within a specific area of British Columbia. As such, the findings are tied to the educational issues and conditions specific to the First Nations students in this area. Thus, while the results may be transferable to bands and teachers in other areas of the province, they are particularly relevant to this area.

The selection of the participants was limited to the input from school administrators, band education coordinators, colleagues, and school records. The use of the school records in the selection process was limited due to the fact that there was no standardized process in place for maintaining these records. In some cases, this was the student's first school year so no previous data was available for comparison. No direct input regarding the selection of participants was received from the First Nations parents. As a result, the term "successful" is based upon the perception of professionals and may not totally reflect the definition of First Nations parents.

Summary

It is evident that both the First Nations community and MoEST have a priority to improve the success of First Nations students. However, they seem to lack a consensus on how best to achieve this priority: The First Nations community wants greater control while MoEST wants to offer more programs. What both have so far failed to examine is the role played by the classroom teacher. In particular, the characteristics and practices of teachers who successfully work with First Nations students have not been examined.

In order to understand these characteristics and practices, six teachers who successfully work with First Nations students were studied using a multi-case study approach. To place the study in perspective, a review of the related literature was first conducted and is presented in Chapter Two. Due to a lack of research that specifically addresses teachers who successfully work with First Nations students, literature on teachers who successfully work with minority groups in general was also examined for common characteristics and practices. Based on the literature, four common teacher attributes were identified: building relationships, the teaching of morality, classroom pedagogy, and teacher preparation. Throughout the review, each of these attributes is examined separately with a focus on how each applies to the success of First Nations students.

To provide particulars specific to this study, a detailed explanation of the methodology is outlined in Chapter Three. Based on the work of Merriam (1988), Stake (1995), Lindlof (1995), Strauss and Corbin (1990), Maxwell (1996), and Wolcott (1995), the data was collected through a series of interviews and observations with each of the participants. To help explain each participant's experiences and to help place this information into a larger context, a common set of open-ended interview questions was used. These open-ended questions were directly related to the research questions, which provided the basic framework to this study.

In Chapter Four, the common characteristics and practices identified among the six participants are compared to the attributes identified in the literature. Each of the characteristics and practices are examined separately. To determine whether a relationship existed between the hiring requirements for

star teachers of children in poverty and teachers who successfully work with First Nations students, the *Star Teacher Interview* (Haberman, 1995) was conducted with and analyzed for each of the participants. Throughout Chapter Four, the voices of the participants are used to support their reflections.

Chapter Five concludes the study by presenting implications and recommendations resulting from this research. Issues for further research are also raised.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

With a limited amount of research available that specifically examines the role of teachers who successfully work with First Nations students, this review incorporates literature on the role of exemplary teachers in teaching minority students in general and covers a significant range of issues considered relevant to this study. In particular, the review considers the relevance of various researches to the role of teachers who successfully work with First Nations students. It is understood that First Nations students constitute only one part of the minority groups that are discussed in the literature. Considered in this review are three areas that impact the success of First Nations students: the students' culture and other issues that arise from being part of that minority, the First Nations community; the common criteria used by teachers who successfully work with minority students including, but not limited to, the positive functions performed by the teachers and the teaching methods that subsequently influence the success of these students in school; and the necessity for appropriate teacher selection and training.

A number of questions provided guidance in reviewing the literature. While not all of these questions are answered within this study, they do provide a starting point for the research. What can teachers do to influence the educational success for First Nations students? When students become behavior problems or leave school, is it the result of something that the teacher has or has

not done? Why do some teachers seem to be more successful than other teachers with First Nations students? Can Haberman's indicators of star urban teachers of children in poverty be used to discern which teachers will most likely be successful at teaching First Nations students? Once identified, can these indicators be used during the posting, interviewing, and hiring processes of teachers who will be extensively working with First Nations students? Are these attributes or functions that quality teachers exhibit able to be copied/learned/duplicated by other teachers? Is it possible to set up teacher training programs to educate teachers on how to build these qualities into their teaching repertoire and, thus, into their classrooms? The significance of these questions is broached throughout this study.

Although very little is written specifically on the traits of teachers who are successful when working with First Nations students, literature on schooling children of various minority cultures suggests that facets of their culture must be built into the teaching and the schooling experiences for them to realize success. Selections from these readings have been explored in the pursuit of common criteria: criteria that might help make First Nations students more successful in school. It is important to access the traditional beliefs of the First Nations community toward the education of their children and the role that these beliefs, plus other daily life experiences, play in educating these children within the public school system.

In reviewing the literature on effective teaching, it is apparent that a number of key attributes have been identified that apply to the successful teaching of all minority groups. Regardless of whether the minority group is First Nations, African-American, deaf, language-deficit, Latino, urban, or

rural-Alaskan, there are certain attributes that a teacher, foreign to the culture of the students, can develop and should possess to enhance the chances of success of these students. These attributes include

1. building relationships. The teacher develops a relationship with the student by gaining an understanding of the student's culture and community, and by comprehending the student's developmental learning needs (Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern, 1990; Schlosser, 1992; Grant, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994; , Grant and Gillespie, 1993).

2. the teaching of morality. Morality is the act of caring, building trust, and encouraging children to grow and become the best that they can be. Morality is a necessary component of a teacher's repertoire in helping students succeed (Ornstein, 1995; Lowman, 1996; Campbell, 1991).

3. teacher preparation. To be effective, teachers need to be appropriately trained in working with the minority student, including First Nations students (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996; Scherer, 1996; Haberman, 1995a).

4. classroom pedagogy. The classroom pedagogy used by teachers needs to reflect and parallel the traditional methods of teaching within the minority community (Knapp, Turnbull, & Shields, 1990; Craig, 1992; Rhodes, 1988).

To better understand the attributes, how they are applied during the learning process, and their importance in the educational success of minority students and, specifically, First Nations students, each attribute will be examined separately in the following section.

Attributes of Exemplary Teachers

Building Relationships

The development of relationships has been identified as central to the teacher success in working with minority students. Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990), in discussing how First Nations students can be reclaimed back into society, maintain that “relationships are real. They exist in the intimate spaces of our lives, when we narrow the distance between ourselves and others” (p. 29). While the teacher’s relationship to the students is of paramount importance, the relationships built between the students’ families and the students’ community are also influential in the educational success of students. Schlosser (1992) indicates that two types of knowledge are essential in the development of strong relationships: generic or cultural knowledge, and knowledge about students’ developmental needs. As both types of knowledge play a different and significant role, there is a need to examine each of them separately.

Cultural Knowledge. Regardless of the student’s ethnic background, Schlosser (1992) indicates that “high impact” (p. 136) teachers take specific steps to understand the cultural background of students by narrowing the distance between themselves and the students. This in turn promotes feelings of belonging and acceptance. In terms of First Nations students, Brendtro et al. (1990) talk about seeking deeper relationships by searching for harmony.

For teachers of African-American students, Ladson-Billings (1994) defines cultural knowledge as being culturally congruent: “This notion of cultural congruence is meant to signify the ways in which the teachers altered their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures to resemble

more closely those of the students' own culture" (p. 16). Similarly, Pease-Alvarez, Garcia, and Espinosa (1991) indicate that effective instruction of language-minority children utilizes instructional strategies that build on interaction patterns from the culture of the student.

In writing about teachers of First Nations students, Grant and Gillespie (1993) suggest that "good teachers make serious attempts to learn about the community they serve and to adapt their behaviors in order to create congruence for the learners" (p. 31). Grant and Gillespie encourage non-Native teachers to cash in on the cultural capital that their students bring to school. They suggest that teachers with radically different backgrounds need to become active in the life of the First Nations community and in their students' environment. Teachers need to be more aware of their own nonverbal cues and need to ensure that these cues become more consistent with the community norms. Furthermore, Grant and Gillespie warn that if non-First Nations teachers are educated according to the perspective of mainstream society they may be unaware of other equally valid perspectives. To overcome this, Grant and Gillespie advocate that teachers learn the history and culture of their First Nations students and develop a good community network of educational support. They summarize their findings by stating that "if Native students know that their role in the classroom is respected and culturally consistent, they will develop the academic competence to participate successfully in the mainstream curriculum" (p. 41).

In addition, Tharp and Yamauchi (1994) indicate that educational problems develop because of the misfit between the informal teaching and learning processes of non-western minorities, and the formal teaching and learning of the typical classroom. For instance, the materials most often used in

the classroom are based on the experiences of the majority culture and may not seem relevant to all of the children. Teachers must become aware that, in the First Nations culture, the children are allowed much autonomy over their own behavior, especially with respect to learning. First Nations children "are not accustomed to being controlled, reprimanded, or punished" (p. 12).

Traditionally, most of the reinforcement that a First Nations child receives comes indirectly from adults through conversation and story telling. Likewise, Brendtro et al. (1990) found that "in place of reward and punishments [when teaching their children First Nations adults traditionally used] . . . modeling, group influence, discussion, and positive expectations" (p. 43).

Successful urban teachers need to be willing to learn about the cultures of their students and to then use that information in the classroom. Grant (1989) warns that, by not learning the cultures of their students, teachers may unconsciously be doing more harm, extending the cycle of poverty and low achievement. The curriculum, Grant urges, must not only be relevant to the life of the student, but must also provide a range of possibilities for the future. Reflecting this comment, Porter and Brophy (1988), in their synthesis on good teaching, offer this summary: "Good teachers adapt instruction to the needs of the students and the situation rather than rigidly following fixed scripts" (p. 75). Porter and Brophy indicate that effective instruction requires the teacher to not only be aware of the subject matter, but to also be aware of the conceptions that their students bring to the classroom that can interfere with their learning.

The importance that successful teachers place on their relationships with others is echoed by Borich (1993), who identifies six characteristics of effective teachers, and stresses that successful teachers get to know the interests, abilities,

learning styles, and the individual strengths and weaknesses of their students.

He supports this by stating that successful teachers

allow themselves to be seen as friends by their students, creating a context for a relationship in which learning can occur. This relationship defines that critical point in the learning curve in which a student's heart must be opened to a relationship before the mind can be opened to learning. Without a genuine relationship between student and teacher, classrooms will increasingly be filled with students who remain passive and uncommitted to their future. (p. 124)

These findings coincide with the works of Hirst (1987), Lowman (1996), and Rhodes (1994) which indicate that to be successful with their students, educators need to build interpersonal relationships with students. These researchers suggest that student achievement will improve as a result of incorporating the local language, values, and culture into educational programs. In learning about the students' environments, teachers give the message that they care.

Taking this concept further, Campbell (1991) reports that teachers, who are successful in teaching aboriginal students, need to exhibit life-long learning by allowing the students to educate the teacher about themselves, their families, their communities, their cultures and histories, and, more importantly, about how they perceive the world. Campbell stipulates that the subject matter should initially stem from the areas that the students know best and then expand to include other cultures, traditions, and communities. Furthermore, McDiarmid, Klienfeld, and Parrett (1988) maintain that while the teachers work in the school, they should live in the First Nations community. Their effectiveness in the school

setting depends, in part, on their success in dealing with relationships and events in the community.

Cautioning teachers to not impose their own cultural premises on their students, Singer (1996) draws a comparison between the urban teacher and the African-American teacher regarding their relationships with their students and points out a number of similarities. He finds that neither group of teachers could achieve any of their classroom goals if they rejected who the students are by not including their home culture in the classroom curriculum. Singer indicates that “teachers need to start from where the students are and not impose cultural assumptions that are based on experiences with middle-class white students from professional families that enter school with a different level of cultural capital” (p. 5).

Adults working with Native children can help strengthen a child’s ability to deal with difficult problems in three ways (Gale, 1990). First, the youth needs to be a contributing, significant member of a family. Adults working with a youth are more successful if they remember to constantly view the child as part of a family, a tribe, and a community. There is a necessity for the adult to include aspects of the child’s family in the discussion process. Second, the youth needs to have positive self-esteem. The educator could accomplish this by incorporating group activities that parallel the tribal values of working together and caring for one another. Finally, there is a need for the youth to develop an on-going meaningful relationship with a significant adult. The teacher must realize that, the development of this relationship takes time, because First Nations students feel disloyal relating to an adult who is an outsider. The outsider must be patience and realize that First Nations children are reluctant to reveal personal

problems because they have been brought up with a strong belief that they are capable of finding their own solutions. In gaining an understanding of the long-suffering of the Native culture, the teacher better understands why these youth are reluctant to seek intervention.

Gale (1990) asserts that the ensuing trust, which develops through increased cultural knowledge, will minimize the differences between the adults and children. "The more similarities the adult shares with the child, the better . . . whatever the particular situation, the more an adult might share in his background with a child, the easier it is to bridge trust" (p. 18).

In summary, to successfully work with First Nations students teachers must build relationships by becoming culturally knowledgeable about their students, and the community in which their students live. This knowledge can be gained by living in the community itself (Campbell, 1991) or by spending time in the First Nations community interacting with the people. This interaction could include attending the First Nations traditional feasts and pow wows, participating in sweat lodge activities, or learning to speak basic First Nations phrases. Regardless of how more cultural knowledge is obtained, it is important that the distance of understanding between the teacher and the students be narrowed. Ideally, the teacher will value the First Nations students for who they are and will encourage those students to teach them about their culture and community. The teacher would then incorporate this new learning into class lessons, making these lessons relevant to the lives of the students. Lesson plans could include making First Nations bannock for lunch, having First Nations crafts as part of the art curriculum, centering science lessons on the life cycle of

salmon or land management, and incorporating the traditional history of the First Nations people and land claim issues into social studies curriculum.

When promoting success among First Nations students, cultural knowledge is only one aspect of the attribute for building relationships that teachers need to consider. The teacher must also be aware of the developmental learning needs of minority students and how these needs can be transferred into working successfully with First Nations students.

Knowledge of Student's Developmental Learning Needs. As the teacher's knowledge of the First Nations students' environment increases, the teacher becomes more aware of the learning styles of those students (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Grant and Gillespie discovered that, traditionally, Natives view their children as complete beings who are in charge of their own development and believe that this development is not to be manipulated by adults. Effective teachers, knowledgeable about this tradition, use a whole language approach to teaching: an approach which emphasizes learning the entire body of knowledge as a complete process and not as separate, small segments of information. This whole language approach, which is consistent with Native traditions for learning, integrates shared learning between the teacher and the students, allows the students to experience activities rather than simply being told about them, and ties together their life experiences, spiritual beliefs and social values (p. 35). The whole language approach allows for the recognition of Native heritage by incorporating the use of concrete materials and shared experiences into the program, and by building on the student's prior knowledge. Grant and Gillespie stipulate that the knowledgeable teacher involves students by using the cooperative learning model. This model, which allows for knowledge to be

passed on through imitation and observation, is harmonious with many of the Native traditions for learning and teaching.

Young Natives utilize the tools of observation and playful imitation to learn from their parents, siblings, and elders (Kaulback, 1984). Cazdon and John (cited in Russell, 1993) called this learning style "learning through looking": The children watch what others are doing until they feel at ease enough to imitate what they have seen. Self-motivation and curiosity are seen as important elements in the learning of specific Native cultural behaviors, such as communicating with elders, respect for elders, understanding family bonds, and building relationships (Wilson, 1993).

Cultural mores are accumulated by observing and practicing the skills taught by parents and other relatives. The child identifies with parents, grandparents, and elders as traditional models who serve to lay the groundwork for later acquisition of knowledge and skill. Children have the freedom to explore their natural surroundings, developing into self-dependent learners; this self-dependency deters children from formulating a restrictive dependency on any one member of the extended family (Marcuzzi, 1986).

Pease-Alvarea, Garcia, and Espinosa (1991) emphasize that the developmental needs of minority students can best be discovered by teachers who become more knowledgeable about the students' environment. Pedagogically, these effective teachers focus on what is meaningful to the children through a thematic curriculum approach, incorporating a curriculum that concentrates on being holistic and experiential rather than being skills-oriented. These teachers encourage collaborative/cooperative interactions among students. A good portion of the class time is organized around a series of

active learning activities that the children pursue either independently or in small, heterogeneous groups.

According to Lazarus (1982), cooperation and harmony are valued in the Native belief systems. Generosity and sharing are important, and people are appreciated for their contributions to the extended family and to the community. Most of the responsibilities and jobs that a Native child does at home and in the community are done interactively and cooperatively, to the benefit of the extended family (Sindell, cited in Russell, 1993). Working as an interactive group in the harvesting of fish, game, and wild berries, and in the sharing of foods, is a tradition that is still carried on today. Sindell (cited in Russell, 1993) explains that Native children observe the cooperation and the generosity of sharing among the community, particularly within the extended family, and they are active participants in these procedures.

When looking at effective instructional conversation in Native classrooms, Tharp and Yamauchi (1994) identified two areas of development that, when used properly, enhance First Nations student learning: sociolinguistics and cognition. Sociolinguistics includes being aware of cultural differences that impact teacher-student communication patterns, such as allowing an appropriate wait-time for students to think about a question, establish a response, and give an answer. Insufficient wait-time can cause reduced student participation and increased teacher frustration. To allow for more student participation, effective Athabaskan teachers have learned to spend less time speaking and more time listening. Similarly, eye contact and the volume of one's voice have significantly different meanings in the Native culture. Not making eye contact is a way of showing respect while, in the predominately western culture, it can represent

disrespect. The volume of voice, at which a teacher addresses a class, may be perceived as loud and angry with one culture but quite acceptable by another. The knowledgeable teacher understands these differences and incorporates them successfully into the classroom setting.

Tharp and Yamauchi (1994) maintain that cognition, their second area of development, occurs when teachers emphasize visual rather than verbal teaching and when situations are approached holistically rather than analytically. The incorporation of holistic, visual, or both elements into lessons tends to make them more interesting and engaging. Tharp and Yamauchi indicate that instructional conversation with these children is maximized by using visual aids, conducting demonstrations, and writing many words on the blackboard.

A differentiation between the conventional wisdom and an alternative approach to sequencing materials and integrating challenge into the curriculum was identified by Knapp, Turnbill and Shields (1990). Teachers using conventional thinking tend to break learning into fixed sequences of discrete skills, beginning with the simplest and working toward the more complex. They typically emphasize mastery of skills by linear progression through a sequence. Knapp et al. maintain that conventional thinking underestimates a student's capabilities, postpones the more challenging and interesting work for too long, and fails to provide a context for learning or for meaningfully using the skills that are taught. They recommend that there needs to be a balance of skill learning between novel and complex tasks; a context for learning that establishes clear reasons for needing to learn and one that helps students relate one skill to another; and an elimination of the redundancies in the curriculum. Knapp et al. claim that classroom grouping should be heterogeneous in nature rather than

placing low-achieving students in one group separate from those who do better. If students are to receive supplementary assistance, it should be provided on an ad hoc basis rather than through long-term arrangements and, when this assistance is provided to a student, it should be integrated as much as possible into mainstream classroom activities.

When examining the literature on building relationships with students and how it relates to student development, it becomes clear that teachers need to become aware of the traditional teaching and learning methods of the community in which these students live. There appears to be consensus among the researchers that, for First Nations students, these traditional methods include a holistic approach to teaching. Holistic teaching incorporates the traditional methods of student observation, self-motivation, and curiosity. Teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students would be expected to concentrate on a thematic curriculum approach with less emphasis on skills-oriented type lessons. As such, lessons would parallel the traditional First Nations beliefs in cooperation, sharing, and inquisitive exploration. In learning about the students' environments, the informed teacher is better able to balance the sociolinguistic and cognitive differences between their own culture and that of their First Nations students.

In summary, the current literature on building relationships with students stresses several vital strategies such as being culturally congruent, matching teaching strategies to student learning styles, exhibiting life-long learning, and involving the family and the community in the child's learning process. However, questions still remain on what teachers of successful First Nations students specifically do to become culturally congruent, familiar with their

students' learning styles, better able to match their teaching strategies appropriately to students, and able to be catalysts for involving family and community members in the learning process. Further inquiries should include looking into the following: whether each of these strategies are completed independently or whether they are applied in an integrated manner, whether there is a specific order to implementing these strategies, and whether some of these strategies are more important than others. The present literature, concentrating on the broad concepts, fails to address these questions.

The Teaching of Morality

The literature shows that another central attribute identifying the exemplary teacher is the exhibition of a moral dimension to teaching. This is reflected by Ornstein (1995):

We need only to remember that our greatest teachers of the past - Moses, Jesus, and Confucius - and our great teachers of the twentieth century - Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. - combined the pursuit of truth, kindness, and caring attitudes with their teaching. (p. 39)

Ornstein suggests that attention needs to be paid to what teachers do in the way they support and care for children, in the way they build trust and mutual respect, and in the way they engage and encourage children to grow and become the best they can be.

Supporting this perspective, Haberman (1995b) refers to this moral dimension as the "professional versus the personal orientation to students" (p. 780). Haberman (1995c) states that the exemplary teacher is sensitive and aware, using words like "caring, respect, and trust" (p. 54) to describe their actions. Furthermore, Haberman explains that the trust that exemplary teachers build

with children enables them to serve as successful models, “not exploiting their warm and close relationship” (p. 56), but shifting the need that a child has from the rewards of a caring adult to the child’s own intrinsic satisfaction.

This topic is further developed by Lowman (1996) who presents a two-dimensional model of effective college instructors. The dimension representing the moral aspect of teaching, described as “interpersonal concerns” and “effective motivation”, is situated second in importance behind the dimension of “intellectual excitement” (p. 37). This moral dimension involves such aspects of teaching as concern, care, friendliness, approachability, respect, and encouragement. Similarly, Marshall (1996) recognizes that good teachers possess three core qualities: knowledge, the ability to convey to students an understanding of that knowledge, and the ability to make the material interesting and relevant to the students. However, a fourth quality exists that complements the previous three: “Good teachers have a deep-seated concern and respect for the students in the classroom” (p. 3).

When teaching First Nations students, Campbell (1991) states, “We need to genuinely care for them and realize that teaching involves more than merely the transfer of information” (p. 5). Campbell supports this by explaining that the students’ scholastic success depends upon their self-concept and self-esteem; the students need to feel good about themselves to do well in school. Brendtro et al. (1990) claim that “fostering self esteem is a primary goal in socializing normal children. . . . Without a sense of self worth, a young person from any culture or family background is vulnerable to a host of social, psychological and learning problems” (p. 35).

Luftwig (1982) indicates that there are many self-esteem building techniques that fail with Native students because these techniques are based on Anglo behavior patterns such as self-praise, teacher praise, popularity, self-pride, competition, personal property, and verbalism. These are in direct conflict with the Native value system of cooperation, shared property, and reticence. Luftwig concludes that those who work with Native students need to understand the Native culture thoroughly. Supporting this concept, Merridy (1994) cautions that perceptions and priorities of what is important are predominately culturally based. He points out that while one culture supports the importance of the feeling side of school, another culture may support the importance of the task side of school. In addition, Merridy suggests that what one culture sees as moral, another culture may not. Therefore, non-Native teachers instructing Native students may think that what they are doing is moral but, by not understanding the culture, they are, in fact, doing an immoral act. Brendtro et al. (1990) state that

missionaries and educators set out to 'civilize' their young 'savages' with an unquestioned belief in the superiority of Western approaches to child care. Typically, children were removed from families and placed in militaristic schools. Forbidden to use their own language under penalty of severe whippings, their supposedly inferior Indian identity was deliberately stripped away. Generations of such cultural intrusion have left deep scars of alienation on Indian children and families. (pp. 34-35)

In summary, the literature indicates that student success is contingent upon the practices of moral teaching. It also cautions that when teachers are foreign to the students' culture they must be aware that what their culture

believes to be moral may, in fact, be in conflict with the moral beliefs of the student's culture. Yet, the literature does not address how the moral beliefs of the successful teacher are aligned with those of the First Nations students. This problem becomes magnified when the teachers, having grown up in the dominant culture, fail to adjust their beliefs to that of the subordinate culture. Further research is need to examined the process that star teachers go through in determining which moral aspects are appropriate to teach, how they learn what the cultural beliefs of their students are, and what teaching techniques they use to reinforce these beliefs. Finally, the individual, moral beliefs of each participant were examined to discover if any consistencies exist among their beliefs and their practices.

Teacher Preparation

Realizing that teachers who possess a greater knowledge about the students' home lives, cultural backgrounds, and developmental needs are more successful with their students, teacher preparation institutes are now adjusting their programs to impact upon this knowledge for prospective student teachers. These adjustments vary from course work which specifically examines the educational needs of First Nations students to the actual placement of student teachers into First Nations communities for their teaching practicums.

Cultural immersion programs, in which prospective teachers go and live in the students' communities while doing their student teaching, are reported by Zeichner and Melnick (1996) as doing a good job in preparing future teachers for the diversity they will find in the classroom. The premise is the same in the three community immersion programs that were studied: Indiana University's American Indian Project, The University of Alaska-Fairbanks' "Teacher for

Alaska” Program, and The Urban Education Program for the Associated Colleges of the Midwest. Student teachers were required to spend an intensive year living, studying, and teaching in a multi-racial and economically-diverse community. Student teachers were required to participate in activities outside of school even if they had to live on reservations, travel to remote rural communities, or move to an urban setting. By participating in social events, being introduced to the traditional ways by village elders, and becoming familiar with how social assistance programs work, the student teachers gained an increase in the knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures. Zeichner and Melnick (1996) maintain, “We’re asking our prospective teachers to make changes that can’t be achieved through mere course work. And we teacher educators are responsible for addressing these shortcomings” (p. 2).

Haberman (1995a) offers five evaluation guidelines for teacher education programs that maintain that they are preparing teachers to work with children in poverty:

1. Those admitted to a program of teacher education are selected on criteria which predict subsequent effectiveness with children/youth of low-income and cultural diversity.
2. The educators of teachers are recognized as effective and current teacher practitioners in schools serving poverty children/youth.
3. The content of the program offered is essentially derived from craft experience, supported by relevant research, theory, and expert opinion.
4. The essential process of teacher education involves on-site coaching by an effective classroom teacher.

5. The quality of programs as determined by the above guidelines is supplemented by analyses of the behavior of the beginning teachers and the learning of pupils in their classes. Children's learning should include, but not be limited to, standardized test scores. (p. 42)

Haberman maintains that while most of these guidelines can not be found in traditional university-based teacher preparation programs, some alternative and cooperative programs are opening up to accomplish this task.

Supporting this idea, Scherer (1996) takes the notion of teacher training a step further by recommending that teacher training institutes should be community-based: residing in the place where the work needs to be done (p. 51). Scherer maintains that prospective teachers need to observe the child as a whole and have an understanding on how the total environment shapes each child. This can be accomplished if teacher training programs go beyond methodology and shift toward helping educators develop into continual learners. The development of teachers is not terminal: Once the teacher qualification courses are completed, teachers still need to continue to study and to grow as educators.

A less researched area of teacher training for helping minority students is that of staff development. Abi-Nader (1991) states that to motivate and inspire students, a staff must continually search for "culturally responsive strategies" (p. 549). She indicates that the context of a school is affected by the cultural differences within it and that a goal for the staff should be to increase its awareness of those differences. Abi-Nader maintains that this awareness is cultivated through teachers having the freedom to study, reflect, and act. The study aspect needs to provide an opportunity for teachers to become more directly involved with the home communities of their students, not just to

provide the opportunity to examine the academic facet of cultural differences. Reflection requires that teachers be provided with the time to analyze and to share their experiences of working and living in a multi-cultural environment. Action emphasizes that teachers need the freedom to collaboratively develop curriculum and strategies that best meet the needs of their culturally diverse community.

In summary, the literature suggests that, at the very least, teachers desiring to work with minority students should do their practicum teaching within the students' community and, if possible, live within the community itself. The literature does not address what components of the teacher training programs prepare them to be exemplary teachers, or how their involvement in the community impacts their skill level for teaching First Nations students. Further inquiries are needed to examine the specific aspects of teacher-training experiences that contributed to the success of First Nations, including the extent to which they were involved in the First Nations community, and how that involvement impacted their teaching.

Classroom Pedagogy

Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields (1990), advocating a new direction for educating children of poverty, indicate that a relationship exists between classroom management and academic work. They argue against using the conventional paradigm of classroom management which stresses establishing uniform structures with clear expectations and guidelines for everyone at the beginning of the year, and that are maintained all year. Instead, Knapp et al. encourage teachers to establish general ground rules that help maintain order early in the year but feel that, over time, they need to base their classroom

management style on a new rationale of control, by providing interesting and engaging academic activities, where classroom expectations are appropriately set for the task at hand, and where students are encouraged to excel. It would not be based on generic rules, rewards, and punishments.

Craig (1992) states that educators need to “infuse the current curriculum with the consistency, predictability, safety, and sense of purpose that can accommodate the cognitive style of children” (p. 70). Children must become active participants in their own learning, in an environment that recognizes the full realities of their lives. Teachers that are interested in the success of children need to integrate the discovery of competence into their learning environments. To ensure that individual teacher practices promote the student to experience competency and not failure, lessons need to be specifically designed to meet the students’ needs for predictability and consistent routines. This is accomplished by the teacher “beginning each lesson with an anticipatory ritual . . . identify[ing] a clear beginning of the task at hand . . . identify[ing] the objective of the lesson and its purpose . . . [using] active instruction and modeling . . . monitoring for understanding . . . [using] guided practice and summary activities” (p. 70).

A number of classroom strategies that the teacher could employ to assist with the successful teaching of Native students are outlined by Rhodes (1988). He cautions against wasting students’ time in class. Activities that are boring or do not lead to a goal can cause boredom and behavior problems. The use of humor in the classroom, both by the teacher and students, helps keep things light and positive. Test results, Rhodes cautions, should not be used to focus on student weaknesses, but rather they should be used to identify student strengths and to expand these strengths into areas that need improvement. He indicates

that a focus on student strengths creates greater success which in turn generates fewer discipline problems. Rhodes states that “the single element which all programs for Native American students have in common is high expectations” (p. 197) and that teachers need to guard against sloppy work by modeling and expecting excellence from the students. He suggests that a teacher needs to be a researcher and needs to study the students to discover what works: The things that do not work must be changed. This would not only provide for better teaching but would also serve as a model for students to become researchers themselves. Finally, Rhodes emphasizes that it is important to have fun and that keeping the atmosphere light creates a better learning environment for everyone, including the teacher.

Borich (1993) characterizes effective teachers as long-term planners and thinkers. He believes that by creating a vision, beginning with the end in mind, allows effective teachers to withstand immediate discomfort because they know where they are going. Regardless of whether it is a desired change in behavior, the proper use of a calculator, or a short-term or a long-term goal, the vision provides the effective teacher with a purpose: a picture of the successes.

A classroom that emphasizes learning and progress over performance and ability is the key to successful learning (Alderman, 1990). By transforming student and teacher errors into teachable moments, the teacher emphasizes that errors do not indicate a lack of ability, but convey that errors are a natural part of the learning process. Alderman contends that all students, especially low-achievers, need opportunities to correct errors and to relearn concepts in a supportive, non-threatening environment. He states, “When we help students take responsibility for their learning, we have taken a giant step in promoting

motivational equality in the classroom. This type of motivational intervention takes time and patience; our focus is in progress, not miracles” (p. 30).

Supporting this, Canfield (1990) sees mistakes as opportunities that can be turned to the student’s advantage. Mistakes, both positive and negative, when accepted as part of the learning process, are then viewed as another factor that facilitates student growth.

Implementing the Pedagogy. While promoting a “service learning pedagogy” (p. 1), Allam (1994) emphasizes that teachers need a wide repertoire of teaching strategies that address a variety of student learning styles and which make “education relevant to a diverse population of learners” (p. 2). Such a pedagogy would have teachers acting as facilitators and building democratic classrooms in which students are actively empowered “to improve their own lives and the lives of others” (p. 3). Craig (1992) also promotes the active involvement of students in the classroom by providing them with opportunities that may not be available to them at home.

Similarly, Singer (1996) advocates for a constructivist model of instruction which would build on what the students already know and would empower them within the classroom community. Taking this further, Knapp et al. (1990) call on teachers to offer instruction balanced between skill learning and the introduction of novel and complex tasks. They stress that teachers need to influence student attitudes and beliefs about the academic content areas, and not only about the skills and knowledge aspects. Knapp et al. maintain that this can be accomplished with a balance between teacher-directed teaching and student-directed learning.

Haberman and Quinn (1986) emphasize that the education system should “stop trying to force disruptive kids to adapt to your schools, and adapt your schools to the needs of the kids instead” (p. 45). Since delinquent youth tend to grasp single concepts more readily, effective teachers organize their lessons into short units, thus allowing these students greater opportunities for success. Students must then display competency in each unit before moving on to the next. To help students accomplish this, teachers need to move away from lecturing and optimize the use of demonstrations. Haberman (1992) refers to teaching as a craft where the demonstration of proficiency is more important than “merely knowing, thinking or feeling about things without having to do something” (p. 127), and where the primary focus relies on experience and practice, and less on learning formulas.

Alderman (1990) found that, after a failure, low-achieving students expend less effort to improve while high-achieving students increased their effort, looking for better strategies to ensure success. To change this situation for the low-achievers, teachers must have the confidence in their own abilities to influence and to motivate, letting the students know they expect them to learn and teaching them the skills necessary for success. Porter and Brophy (1988) emphasize that this is best accomplished by good teachers when they reflect on the feedback pertaining to their classroom instruction. In turn, this reflection drives good teachers to increase their professional knowledge which results in better instruction to students. Porter and Brophy maintain that effective instruction occurs when students are provided with the strategies to monitor their own learning, the ability to reflect upon the outcomes, and the knowledge

on how to improve. These are skills that good teachers model in attempts to improve their own classroom skills.

While researching the culture of the classroom, O'Shanassy (1996) outlined several characteristics which assure that quality learning takes place for all students. One characteristic is modeling how to complete tasks and demonstrating appropriate behavior (p. 2). This includes demonstrating how to learn from mistakes, preparing to assist students who struggle with concepts, and eliminating the concept of failure by utilizing open-ended problems. Another characteristic is that the teacher motivates, empowers, and trusts students (p. 3): Teachers remain focused and never lose sight of the purpose of the lesson, ensuring that all students have the same conceptual understanding. Allowing unsuccessful students input in what their learning materials should be and how those materials are to be used, leads to more successful educational programs (Taff, 1990).

Sternberg, Okagaki, and Jackson (1990) stressed that teaching practical intelligence can foster student success. Practical intelligence lessons consist of three parts: managing themselves, managing tasks, and cooperation. To manage themselves, students are provided with an orientation of the concept to be taught. The concept builds on the prior knowledge of the students allowing them to manage the tasks. Cooperation exists when the teacher and the students work together to revisit and then revise any incorrect conceptions that students may have developed. Small group activities provide students with the necessary practice to understand their new knowledge, while integrated activities encourage students to apply this knowledge to their own lives. Brendtro et al.

(1990) state that traditional Native educational practices emphasized the following:

(1) significance was nurtured in a cultural milieu that celebrated the universal need for belonging, (2) competence was insured by guaranteed opportunities for mastery, (3) power was fostered by encouraging the expression of independence, and (4) virtue was reflected in the preeminent value of generosity. . . . [They] propose[d] belonging, mastery, independence and generosity as the central values - the underlying theme - of positive cultures for education. (p. 35)

The literature implies in order for students to be successful they must be actively engaged in the learning process. This engagement is heightened when the teacher focuses on the needs of the students, provides more visual demonstrations and less lecture style lessons, and models that mistakes are learning opportunities which are an acceptable part of academic growth. Further to this, teaching needs to take place in an environment which maintains consistency and predictability, portrays a sense of purpose, and incorporates safety, humor, and fun in the classroom. There appears to be some difference of opinion as to whether learning should be broken down into smaller segments in order for the students to experience success, or whether students should be encouraged to excel by presenting them with more challenging work and expecting them to achieve success. However, research indicates that which ever method is chosen it is clear that materials and learning must build upon prior student knowledge and that the teacher plays a key role in modeling expected work habits and behavior.

Summary

The literature identifies many facets of teaching that teachers employ in working successfully with minority students, including those of First Nations ancestry. It further suggests that these facets can be grouped into four encompassing themes or attributes: building relationships, the teaching of morality, teacher preparation, and classroom pedagogy. The literature on building relationships indicates that in order for teachers to work successfully with First Nations students they need to implement a holistic method of teaching while at the same time utilizing teaching and learning methods of the local community. The literature makes no reference to how this would take place in a public school classroom containing both First Nations and non-First Nations students. Further, the literature is silent on how a teacher foreign to the culture becomes knowledgeable enough to teach, using the traditional methods. How do they learn the subtle little differences in the culture that only a person growing up in the culture would know?

The teaching of morality parallels the spiritual and emotional quadrants that First Nations people believe must be present in a complete human. These quadrants maintain that the building of trust and mutual respect are key ingredients to becoming a whole being (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1990). The problem exists not so much with the teaching of morality, but with the alignment between the teacher's personal beliefs and those of the First Nations children and their community. Proper moral alignment is necessary in preventing actions that are moral according to the teacher's beliefs but are perceived as immoral by the First Nations community.

The research would indicate that teachers would be successful in working with First Nations students if they were placed on the reserve or lived in a First Nations community during their teaching practicums. However, there are teachers, identified as working successfully with First Nations students, who received no formal teacher training on dealing with First Nations students and did not complete a practicum in a Native community. There is a need to examine the early encounters of these exemplary teachers with First Nations communities to find any common traits that may have contributed to their success with First Nations students.

It appears that teachers who actively involve First Nations students in the process, who view mistakes as teachable moments, and who utilize more hands-on demonstrations would be more successful working with these students. The possibility for success is increased if this is done in an environment that is safe for students to challenge the unknown and in which a sense of fun and humor are maintained. What is uncertain is how the learning components should be presented. Haberman and Quinn (1986) maintain that learning improves if it is presented in small segments to allow for a better chance of success while Rhodes (1988) and Craig (1992) suggest that presenting the students with more challenging materials and expecting them to achieve will enhance learning. Whichever method is utilized to present the learning components there is consensus that all learning should build on the students' prior knowledge.

In the absence of substantial research that looks specifically at teachers who successfully work with First Nations students, a multi-case study research method was used to analyze the qualities that enable certain teachers who,

against all odds, promote First Nations students to learn more; act with respect toward themselves and others; and become happy, successful, contributing citizens. In doing so, Haberman's interview process was conducted and used as a starting point for this study. It was felt that by remaining rigorous to the research, specific attributes could be identified in these teachers which will ensure greater success for First Nations students, and that this finding could have implications for the training, recruiting, and hiring of teachers of First Nations students.

Chapter Three provides a detailed explanation of the methodology. Research data was collected through a series of interviews and observations with each of the six participants. To assist in placing the information into a larger context, a common set of open-ended interview questions was used which were directly related to the research questions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The literature review indicates that there are aspects of teaching and certain teacher attributes that increase the likelihood of success for minority students including those of First Nations ancestry. Haberman (1993), through a series of interviews and observations, was able to identify seven attributes of star teachers of urban students living in poverty. I proposed to examine the teachings and beliefs of six teachers, identified as working successfully with First Nations students, to discover the underlying attributes that make these teachers more successful than others while working with First Nations students.

As the present study sets out to explore the processes and dynamics of practice, a qualitative multi-case study approach (Merriam, 1988) was selected. In support of this, Stake (1995) pointed out that one of the major differences between quantitative and qualitative research is "the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry" (p. 37). Rather than merely seeking a quest for explanation and control, qualitative researchers seek an understanding of the complex interrelationships that exist. Merriam (1988) maintains that case study research is chosen when "researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (p.10). The multi-case study approach, by exploring a number of similar cases, allows for a greater degree of understanding as it allows for individual as well as cross-case analysis. Further, Merriam writes, "Analyzing data in a quantitative multi-case study is identical to analyzing data in a single qualitative case study" (p. 155).

This chapter delineates the methodology including a methodological overview, the qualitative methods used for data collection, the selection and protection of the human subjects, the data analysis, and a summary. Scherr (personal communication, July 1996) stresses that qualitative research is data in words and that the researcher is the instrument. Supporting this Merriam (1988) believes that the investigator is "the single most important component in qualitative research" (p. 122). With this in mind, the chapter concludes with a synopsis of the researcher's background and with a summary.

Methodological Overview

The present study sought to discover attributes that distinguish teachers who successfully work with First Nations students. Anderson and Meyer (cited in Lindlof, 1995), Lindlof (1995), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) concur that the purpose of qualitative research is not to analyze the data according to statistical procedures normally associated with quantitative research methodology, but rather qualitative research methods require the analysis of the qualities of human behavior while preserving its form and content. In addition, "qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19).

Since this study focused on patterns of human thought and behavior, a multi-case study research approach was utilized. Merriam (1988) indicates that "any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study" (p. 10). The present study utilizes extensive fieldwork involving participant observations, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and the examination of artifacts to discover the values and beliefs that are shared by these teachers. Due to the sociocultural analysis of this multi-case study, it could

be referred to as an “ethnographic case study” (Merriam, 1988, p. 24). Van Maanen (1995) indicates that it is “the ethnographer’s direct personal contact with others that is honored by readers as providing a particular sound basis for reliable knowledge” (p. 3). It is through an ethnographic multi-case study framework that the present study attempts to discover the underlying attributes that allow these six teachers to work successfully with their First Nations students.

Validity and Reliability

Validity, the extent to which the research “is believable and trustworthy” (Merriam, 1988, p. 166), has been defined in many ways. For Merriam, validity exists if the findings capture what exists in reality. Maxwell (1996) also indicates that validity is determined by the relationship that exists between the findings and the real world. In a different perspective, Wolcott (1995) discusses validity as the concern with whether the findings match the initial intent of the research: Validity exists if the findings “measured what the research purports to measure” (p. 169). Marshal and Rossman (1989) caution that “qualitative research does not have the general acceptance that quantitative paradigms enjoy, and therefore, more attention must be devoted to a sound rationale than with more traditional proposals” (p. 144).

However, Maxwell (1996) indicates that while “there are no methods that can assure you that you have adequately grasped those aspects of the world that you are studying” (p. 86), there are certain things that can be done to increase the validity of the research. Maxwell indicates that within qualitative research three types of understanding exist: description, interpretation, and theory, each of which has their own distinct threats to its validity.

If the researcher's data for describing what was seen or heard is inaccurate or incomplete, a threat to validity exists. In this present study, validity was enhanced by taping all of the interviews, ensuring that all field notes were as "detailed, concrete, and chronological as possible" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 89). In order to ensure that the fieldwork was conducted in as natural and non-contaminated setting as possible, the classrooms were visited in advance of any formal observations or interviews and the teachers were permitted to select the time and location of the interview.

If the researcher imposes personal meaning to the data by failing to understand the participants' perspective or the meanings they attach to their words or actions, a threat to valid interpretation exists (Maxwell, 1996). Ensuring that on-site visits were adequate in number optimized the interpretative validity of this study. To give the researcher a better understanding of what was observed or recorded, interpretations were checked with the participants, and the accuracy of the interpretations were discussed with knowledgeable individuals.

Theoretical validity is threatened when the researcher "is not collecting or paying attention to discrepant data, or not considering alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomena" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90). The theoretical validity of this study was enhanced by remaining cognizant of personal biases and assumptions, and by involving the participants in all phases of the research. Of course, no methods or procedures can guarantee validity unless they are actually used. Thorough thought and effective implementation of case study research strategies were used to enhance the validity of this study.

Reliability is “the extent to which one’s findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 1988, p. 170). However, the very nature of qualitative research makes it difficult to duplicate the findings. Reliability can be improved, as reported by Miles (cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1981), if the researcher is “sensitive, . . . a problem finder and pattern creator, . . . reconstructor of realities, . . . trustworthy, . . . can engage in a bias-free observation, . . . has patience, . . . and control enough to watch rather than intervene” (p. 147). In contrast to this, Wolcott (1995) questions the emphasis placed on reliability by stating that “the problem with reliability is that the rigor associated with it redirects attention to research processes rather than to research results” (p. 167). While rigor associated with the process is important throughout the research stage, in the present study rigor to the research results was maintained by exposing the data to multiple levels of analysis to elicit themes and to provide the basis for making interpretations.

Merriam (1988) indicates that “reliability and validity are inextricably linked in the conduct of research” (p. 171). Using Merriam’s perspective, the reliability of this research was augmented by the rigor that was associated with maintaining its validity. This rigor included remaining true to the data collection process, sharing the preliminary findings with the participants, continually reexamining and debriefing throughout the analysis process, and using multiple levels of analysis.

Research Design

Case studies, according to Cronbach (cited in Merriam, 1988), “take meaning from their time and place, and from the conceptions held by those who pose the questions and decide how to tabulate” (p. 1). A multi-case study design was selected to learn the individual stories of what the teachers do and think that

foster the success of their First Nations students. The examination of similar cases allows for the creation of individual as well as cross-case analysis. This study examined the cultural ideas, personal beliefs, professional knowledge, and behaviors that help define the attributes of what these teachers do. To accomplish this, each teacher was subjected to four observations conducted in the culture of their classroom and five interviews consisting of semi-structured, open-ended questions. As well, classroom artifacts were examined to support what was said or observed.

Data Collection

Interviews and classroom observations were central to this study. This format permitted each of the six participants to reflect more deeply as they shared their story about their life and career experiences while working successfully with First Nations students. Each story provided unique perspectives regarding the influences and challenges that shaped each educator's life and beliefs.

Seidman (1991) explains that interviewing "provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (p. 4). As a qualitative form of inquiry, interviewing is central to the data gathering technique. According to Seidman, "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 3).

In order to seek out each participant's drama, interviews with questions that were semi-structured and open-ended were conducted which helped explain what was experienced and assisted in placing this information into a

larger context. A common set of preliminary questions based on the research literature was used to further extract exploration topics as they emerged through the interview and the observation processes. Each set of five interviews were between forty-five to sixty minutes in duration and, at the request of the participants, were conducted at the local school board office. Each of the four observations was approximately an hour in length. The process began with an interview followed by an observation and alternated in this manner throughout the process. This allowed for verification of what was said to coincide with what was observed and assisted in the development of the next set of interview questions. The interviews and observations were conducted between December 1998 and June 1999. The process was delayed because I was new to the region and had to encourage the participants to develop trust.

There are many advantages to collecting data through interviewing. Among its strengths are the following: "There is less chance of misunderstanding between the inquirer and the respondent . . . they elicit the respondent's own frame of reference" (Guda & Lincoln, 1981, p. 187). Yet, at the same time, Fetterman (1989), Spradley (1979), and Wolcott (1995) caution that discovering the language is key to soliciting information from interviews. It is vital to this study that the language of the participants was understood so that the true meaning of what was being said could be uncovered.

The first interview was based on interview questions that Haberman used to identify star teachers of children in poverty. These questions were employed to determine whether Haberman's criteria would apply to teachers who were successful in working with First Nations students. This initial interview also supplied background information regarding the participants formal educational

process, teaching experiences, and previous relationships with First Nations students and communities. The second interview served as a forum to validate and verify the preliminary findings, clarify classroom observations, and an expanded understanding of each participant's unique experiences. It was during this interview that two of participants, forced by participation in the study to examine and clarify their beliefs more deeply, became uncomfortable and sensitive to the process. The third and forth sets of interviews were used to explore more deeply the topics raised and to address unanswered questions to participant statements or to clarify what was taking place in the classroom. The final interview focused on the beliefs that the individual participants held regarding what a teacher could do to increase the success rate of First Nations students. As well as being tape-recorded, journal notes were kept of all interviews. These notes were used to record non-verbal information that the participant transmitted.

Fetterman (1989) defines participant observation as "combin[ing] participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data" (p. 45). During this study, initial observations of the participants allowed the researcher to learn the teacher's patterns of communication and behavior. As I became more familiar with their culture, I acquired the knowledge to develop a more refined baseline concerning the meanings of these observations. Fetterman refers to the acquisition of ethnographic knowledge as beginning "with a panoramic view of the community, clos[ing] in to a microscopic focus on details, and then pan[ning] out to the larger picture again - but this time with a new insight into minute details" (p. 47).

Entry Into the Population

A field-based qualitative study begins with obtaining entry into the population. My entry was facilitated through my experiences with both the First Nations community and the educational community. Those experiences included my involvement in the education of First Nations students for the past ten years. During this time, I was a school-based administrator of a school enrolling eighty-five percent First Nations students; worked for the Field Services Branch of the Ministry of Skills, Training and Education coordinating the educational needs throughout the region; observed the negotiations of Local Education Agreements (LEAs) between the school board and the local bands; attended numerous First Nations cultural events; and participated in conversations with the local First Nations education advisory committee.

New to the particular location of this study, my knowledge and experiences gave me an understanding of the universal First Nations issues and protocols that permitted me to quickly establish a level of trust. This trust was based on the understanding that I truly wanted to do what was best for First Nations students. My entry into the population was enhanced by the First Nations coordinator who was well respected in both the First Nations and education communities. Together we spend time providing learning resources, professional development opportunities, and listening to the concerns of the First Nations communities.

Selection of Subjects

The selection of subjects was limited to the Nicola-Similkameen region in the central portion of the province of British Columbia, Canada. School based administrators and First Nations education coordinators were asked to identify

teachers whom they felt successfully worked with First Nations students. As a starting point, the criteria for identifying these teachers was based on some of Haberman's star teacher criteria: "principals rate them highly; other teachers regard them as outstanding; central office supervisors consider them successful; . . . and they evaluate themselves as outstanding teachers" (Haberman, 1995c, p. 1). It should be noted that some of Haberman's star teacher criteria was not used to help in the identification process: "their students score higher on standardized tests; parents and children think they are great; . . . cooperating universities regard them as superior " (p. 2). However, the principals and coordinators were free to use their own criteria to identify teachers. The selection process was supported by staff members working at various schools throughout the region. While the intent during the selection process was to examine school records, this proved inconsistent because two of the teachers taught kindergarten for which no records existed, and there were no common criteria for record keeping between schools. Due to a lack of time to develop trust with the First Nations parents and the young age of the students, their input was not sought during the identification process.

None of the teachers selected for this study were of First Nations ancestry. Band schools employed three of the identified teachers and three worked in public schools. Three of the teachers, two males and one female taught the intermediate grades, two female teachers taught kindergarten and the remaining female teacher taught grade one.

To eliminate any ethical conflicts with the local teachers' union, permission from that union's president was sought before teachers were asked to evaluate their colleagues by identifying them as teachers who work successfully

with First Nations students. Permission for the teachers to participate was sought from the Superintendent of Schools for teachers of the public system and from the First Nations Education Coordinator for teachers of the band-operated schools.

The selection process was conducted over a period of six weeks. During that time, input from district staff, school personnel, and Band Education Coordinators was collected. The participants met with the researcher who outlined the research objectives and time requirements of their involvement. All of the participants were required to sign a consent form which allowed them to drop out of the process at any time.

Protection of Subjects

To ensure the protection of the participants, a proposal was submitted to the University of San Diego's Committee on Protection of Human Subjects for its review and approval. This process ensured that the rights or sensitivities of any individuals were not violated, that the research design was conducted within the ethical guidelines as established by the University of San Diego, and that it was also in compliance with the federal and state regulations for protecting subjects' identities. Since the focus of this study was to involve the participants in an educational conversation regarding their teaching strategies and beliefs, it presented the participants with no risks. In view of the fact that there was no extra preparation required by teachers, the classroom observations did not interrupt any workplace activity. Furthermore, all interviews held during personal time and away from the workplace, created no disruptions to the participants' normal teaching routines.

Before beginning the research, a letter outlining the purpose and procedures of the study was sent to the Superintendent of Schools and the First Nations Educational Coordinators asking for their approval. Prior to participating in this study, all participants were required to sign a consent form. This form made them aware of the research procedures, ensured their confidentiality and autonomy, and informed them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. To protect participant identity, all materials were coded in a manner known only to the researcher and all materials were locked in a location away from the research base. To protect each participant's anonymity, fictitious names were used throughout this study. In addition, all data that may lead to the identity of the participant was masked. Once their narrative recordings were transcribed, each participant had the opportunity to verify and confirm the transcriptions. In addition, these responses and reflections were recorded and became part of the on-going data analysis process.

Approach to Data Analysis

"Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 112). Data analysis involves organizing all of the information that you have seen, heard, and read so that it makes sense. According to Taylor and Bogdan (cited in Merriam, 1988), the goal of data analysis is "to come up with reasonable conclusions and generalizations based on a preponderance of data" (p. 130). With a multi-case study approach, the researcher attempts to identify "processes and outcomes that occur across many cases or sites" (Miles & Huberman, cited in Merriam 1988, p. 154).

All interviews were tape-recorded, therefore, the data analysis began with the transcription of each interview prior to the next; "to work most reliably with the words of the participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text to study" (Seidman, 1991, p. 87). The initial transcription was examined, according to Haberman's process of analysis, to determine whether these teachers exhibit similar teaching attributes as the star teachers of urban teachers in poverty: persistence, response to authority, application of generalizations, approach to at-risk students, personal versus professional orientation toward teaching, burnout, and fallibility (Haberman, 1991, pp. 4-8). The data analysis of the initial interview lead to more probing questions. The data analysis of each interview was completed before any of the follow-up interviews were conducted. Each transcription was analyzed for emerging themes and issues. Any issues requiring further clarification were included in scheduled follow-up interviews.

Once sufficient data had been collected, it was consolidated, reduced, and interpreted into an extensive analysis. Merriam (1988) states that "at this stage, the research is virtually holding a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments" (p. 131). The objective for this study was to organize the data into emergent cultural themes and theories and, as a result of the individual participant's reflections, explore any unique findings. "Producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 1988, p. 163) should be the concern of all research, including qualitative research. Following this process, interpretations are generated, similarities are offered, implications are suggested, and conclusions are extended that may be useful to individuals or institutions interested in improving the educational success of First Nations students.

Background of the Researcher

Merriam (1988) emphasizes that “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 19). In recognition of this, the background of the researcher is outlined.

In 1975, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario, with a major in mathematics and received a Bachelor of Education degree from Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario. In 1993, I received a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration from San Diego State University, San Diego, California. Presently, I am enrolled in the Leadership Studies Doctorate Program at the University of San Diego, San Diego, California.

I worked for twenty-five years in the field of education as a classroom teacher, a school-based administrator, and a member of the district staff. During this time, I was the principal of a public school that serviced two reserves and, consequently, the school had a very high First Nations enrollment. In addition to the district office duties, my role included being the regional coordinator for the northwest region of the province with the Field and Services Branch of the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training. These duties included coordinating curriculum implementation for six school districts in the region. Five of these districts have a high First Nations enrollment and three of these five districts continually score near the bottom of the province on provincial tests. In the position of assistant superintendent, I am directly responsible for the supervision of the First Nations coordinator, negotiating the Local Education Agreement with the neighboring bands, and sitting, as a participating member, on the First Nations Local Education Advisory Council.

In 1992, I first became interested in examining the role that the teacher played in the success of First Nations students within the school system. At that time, I was assigned the principalship of a kindergarten to grade ten school enrolling approximately eighty percent First Nations students. Previous to this assignment, I had been a school principal for ten years. It was during my tenure at this school that I observed a number of behavior problem, non-achieving First Nations students in one school year become well-behaved, academically thriving students the following year. Parent perspectives went from a school that 'could do no good' to one that 'could do no wrong'. The only perceivable change in the students' lives was the teacher who was teaching them. At the same time, I was reading the work of Dr. Martin Haberman on star teachers of children in poverty. His work and the informal observations of what was happening at my school inspired me to analyze what teachers who successfully worked with First Nations students did to generate this success.

Shortly after leaving this school, I was seconded to work for MoEST as a Regional Coordinator and became aware of the Ministry's high priority to improve the success of First Nations students. This priority was evident when three provincial programs were announced. However, these programs appeared to not take into account what my real-life experiences had shown me: The classroom teacher is key to the success of First Nations students. It is important to realize that my life experiences bring natural biases as to how one might view the similar phenomenon. Bias, Wolcott (1995) likened to air as "something we must live with but as something we cannot do without" (p. 164). In explaining that bias, itself, is not the problem, Wolcott states, "One's purpose and assumptions need to be made explicit and used judiciously to give meaning and

focus to the study” (p. 165). Through my experiences of being an educator and working closely with First Nations communities, I bring the knowledge and sensitivity required to analyze the data and to better communicate the meaning and perspectives found through the process.

Summary

This study proposed a multi-case study investigation of six teachers who work successfully with First Nations students within the Nicola-Similkameen region of British Columbia, Canada. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, an attempt was made to understand the attributes of these teachers that make the First Nations students in their classrooms successful. This study investigated whether these attributes are similar, and limited, to those discovered in star teachers of urban students in poverty, as researched by Haberman (1995c), or whether there are additional, or different, attributes for these teachers who successfully worked with First Nations students.

Upon reflection, in response to the interview questions posed, each participant was provided the opportunity to express the beliefs, experiences, actions, and strategies that they felt were vital to the success of the First Nations students with whom they worked. Their accounts provided a rich description of the attributes that allowed teachers to work successfully with First Nations students.

In Chapter Four, a presentation and analysis of the data are organized according to the attributes identified in the literature. Each attribute contains several facets; each of these facets are examined separately. Throughout Chapter Four, to add authenticity to the data, the voices of the participants are used to support their reflections.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Analyses of Findings

Introduction

This study was designed to examine the attributes of teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students. The literature review supports the contention that certain characteristics and practices apply to teachers who are effective in assisting minority students to be successful in school. These characteristics and practices can be divided into four identifiable areas: building relationships, the teaching of morality, teacher preparation, and classroom pedagogy. However, in view of the fact that limited research is available that specifically addresses the functions performed by teachers who work successfully with First Nations students, the present study was undertaken.

This chapter consolidates the interview and the observation data on teachers who work successfully with First Nations students and analyzes it according to case study strategies. Merriam (1988) states “a qualitative design is emergent” (p. 123) and for this reason the data collection and the data analysis in this study were done simultaneously. The process used during the present study began with questions that were general to the study and narrowed in relevance based on the answers and observations. As the data was collected, it was analyzed for emergent patterns and regularities. The patterns and regularities then formed categories into which subsequent data was sorted. Due to the multi-case study format of this study, a multi-layered analysis took place: The data was first being analyzed at the individual level and then the findings were

consolidated and analyzed at the group level. For the purpose of this study, each of the emerging characteristics and practices will be examined independently. While there is overlap between some of the characteristics and practices, it is vital to examine the subtle differences and the role that each characteristic and practice plays in allowing teachers to work successfully with First Nations students. Following this examination, the characteristics and practices will be grouped into inclusive key areas or attributes. These attributes will then be compared to the attributes, identified in the literature, on teachers who work successfully with minority students. This is followed by the interview results comparing the data of teachers who work successfully with First Nations students to the star teachers of children in poverty based on Haberman's (1991) *Star Teacher Selection Interview*. The attribute relating to teacher preparation and the role that it plays on teachers working successfully with First Nations students will be examined separately. A summary statement concludes this chapter.

Emerging Characteristics and Practices

During the analysis process, it became evident that these six teachers held similar characteristics and practices that affected the success rate of First Nations students. Each of these emerging characteristics and practices will be examined independently.

Dealing With Different Minority Groups

When asked how they deal with minority groups or individuals within their classrooms, they revealed that teaching to individual needs, regardless of a student's cultural background, is of utmost importance. The teachers stressed that it is crucial to know the environment from which each student comes and to adjust their teaching practices accordingly. Bill summarized this concept:

In terms of an education point of view, I see them [minority students] as a group of people, like any other group of people, in need of an approach that meets their needs. There needs to be an understanding of the environment from which they come in order to develop the program within a school that is appropriate for them as much as possible.

Throughout the observations of these teachers, the desire to see and to teach each student as an individual was evident and was strongly emphasized by all teachers during the interviews. When asked to identify minority groups at her school, Kathy supported looking at each student individually:

In our school, it's kids with two parent families [that] are a minority group. We have to keep that in mind . . . so, what we are having to look at is being flexible and keeping our minds open to kids whose circumstances are different, being cognizant of the fact that the kids don't come from the same background.

All of the teachers interpret the essential components of learning to be the same for First Nations students as for non-First Nation students. In fact, they all indicated that they look at each child as an individual, regardless of cultural background and try to meet the needs of each as an individual. However, meeting individual needs does not result in them planning individual lessons. Observations suggested that the teachers teach a single concept to the whole group and modify the seat work expectations for individuals. The general explanation by the teachers for this practice is that students do not want to be viewed as being different, or they do not want to be academically centered out as struggling with concepts. In other words, this seems to imply that these teachers do not want to embarrass their students.

Recognizing the Students' Culture and Background

The teachers of this study work in schools that are located in three distinct communities. Each of these communities has separate cultural activities, such as a pow wow, that the other communities are invited to attend.

Although none of the teacher participants were of First Nations ancestry, they all stated that they are knowledgeable about these community cultural events: when they take place, where they take place, and what the significance of these activities are to the First Nations community in which they take place. However, none of the teachers had attended any of these First Nations cultural activities. Three of these teachers currently work in band schools and two others previously taught in schools situated in First Nations communities. The experiences that these teachers have obtained from working in these schools gives them a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of cultural events in the First Nations community. These teachers expressed that they felt that it was not necessary for them to be involved in the community activities, but that it was important that they were aware of what was going on and what the significance of the event was, so that they could discuss upcoming community events with their students.

All of the teachers claimed that contact with parents by phoning and by writing is important. They asserted that positive communication on a regular basis is more consequential than contacting parents over negative issues. Bill explained, "I love to catch the parents who think you are phoning for something negative . . . [you can] hear it in their voices and then you say something good instead." Although all of the teachers felt that positive regular contact was

important, they expressed the concern that this is an area that requires strengthening on their part.

The teachers demonstrated an understanding toward the needs and struggles facing the First Nations students in the regular education system. Because the teachers wanted to respect and support the culture and the language of their students, they were hesitant to make comments that might be interpreted as negative toward the students' culture or that might encourage some of the stereotypes. The difficulties in working with students of a culture different from that of the teacher were expressed when the teachers made statements such as "[there is] a need to be respectful and take responsibility," "[First Nations students] need to feel proud of who they are;" "they need to feel like they belong;" "they must feel that they are accepted;" "don't deny them [First Nations students] their own reality in the hopes of giving them a better one;" "show acceptance of their reality and information base;" and "there is a need to be patient and to listen."

One teacher specifically indicated that external factors such as home issues could play a role in the academic success of First Nations students. Three teachers were reluctant to generalize about First Nations students because they felt that the background issues and needs vary as much with non-First Nations students as they do with First Nations students. For this reason, some of the teachers were unwilling to speak of First Nations traits in fear of making blanket statements. The teachers appeared to want to emphasize the positive aspects of the students' culture and to de-emphasize any negative aspects. They did not want to be critical of the cultural values of the students because they felt that they might not know enough about those values to understand them.

When beginning his teaching career, one teacher expressed a concern and a frustration over the hesitation of First Nations students to express themselves orally. This teacher indicated that it was difficult to know the background of First Nations students because they tend to speak less about personal issues. In the teacher's view the students seemed unwilling to share information about their family problems. It was not until he became aware of and accepting of the cultural differences that he felt he was having an impact on the lives of his First Nations students.

Beliefs About Working With Special Needs Students

As evident through their interview comments and through the observed interactions within the classroom, all of the teachers expressed care and showed concern about individual student success. Although they verbalized and exhibited concern for the academic success of all students, some of the teachers questioned the academic value of placing all special needs students within the regular class setting. John made the following remark about a particular special needs student:

I don't think that I am meeting his needs in the classroom setting and I don't know if it is possible. The way our school is set up and the way my classroom is set up, the things that I am trying to do are just not meeting his needs. I don't think it's a lack of effort on anyone's part; it's just not working . . . We are at a point where we need to look at different options, and without knowing what any of those options are, there is the feeling that I am sending him . . . to the unknown.

The teachers were not questioning the worth of these special needs children but rather whether a regular classroom is the best learning environment

for some of them. Instead of using a blanket judgment that all special needs students should follow the inclusive model, these teachers suggested a desire to look at each student and each student's situation individually, in order to place the child in the optimum learning situation. Placement decisions that the teachers suggested that they would like to see examined on an individual child need-basis include full inclusion, partial inclusion, or total segregation. The teachers wanted to continue to search for the best options for each special needs student.

Those teachers who had recently dealt with special needs students in their classes also expressed a need for additional teacher support. They held a common belief that without that extra support full inclusion is very draining on the classroom teacher.

Interacting With Students

Two things that were immediately impressive within each of the classrooms were the amount of verbal praise given by the teachers to the students and the smiles displayed on the faces of the teachers and students. These classrooms were fun and relaxed places to be. The atmosphere within the classrooms, believed to be the result of the teachers' organizational skills, their positive happy attitudes, and their ongoing rapport with their students, was warm and caring: It was an atmosphere in which students were not put down but were treated respectfully. This respect for the student is illustrated by Brenda who commented to the rest of the class, "Jacob's working against the current," referring to a student who was off-task and by Bev who, when referring to a student who was being a disruptive influence on others, stated, "Lewis, I think it is time for you to go have a rest at your seat."

The first teacher utilized a little humor to diffuse an academic difficulty while the second teacher dealt with a social difficulty by giving a gentle reminder, and the decision to get back on task was left in the hands of the child. In both instances, the inappropriate behavior was dealt with in a manner that allowed the offenders to save face among their peers. Supporting this concept, John stated, "Something that I'll always avoid intentionally is sarcasm. . . . The kids at my age level [the ones that I am teaching] don't deal well with it [sarcasm]."

Similarly, other non-threatening comments or techniques were used by teachers to keep their caring relationship with the students at the forefront of teaching activities and to leave the decision to get back on task with the student. Observed techniques included verbal commands, a raised arm, the location of the teacher within the class, and finding something else that the student could do.

These teachers did not think in terms of punishments for misbehavior but rather they worked at diffusing possible problems before they developed. When conflict did occur, the teachers were not quick to take ownership of the problem. In the majority of cases, the problem was given back to the students who owned it, along with some teacher guidance and advice on how the situation could be resolved.

Throughout the observations, it was noted that these teachers consistently made their students feel valued and respected. One way in which this was accomplished was by reversing the roles between the students and the teacher, allowing the students to take on the teaching role while the teacher becomes the student, being taught lesson objectives and cultural knowledge by the student.

There were other teacher actions that made the students feel valued and respected: creating the time to really listen to the students, finding ways for making students successful and then sharing those successes with others, and teaching the same core lesson to all students but adjusting the seat work activity to meet individual needs.

Student success was further enhanced by the safe academic environment created by all of the teachers: an environment that allowed students to take chances without fear of being belittled. For example, instead of teachers openly stating that an answer was wrong, they viewed each answer as a possibility and used such phrases of encouragement as “good potential,” “well done,” “a good effort,” and “you are on target.” On the topic of student success, Bill explained

I think success is related to the environment in which kids are learning . . .

The environment [needs to be] one that is secure for them, where they feel relaxed and [they] can trust. In general, that’s what happening in a classroom . . . or at home . . . in any learning environment . . . I think the kids have to feel safe. They need to feel safe . . . to make mistakes.

Role Modeling

Role modeling was considered to be an important aspect of interacting with students by these teachers. Although one teacher displayed a discrepancy between what was said during the interview and what was observed during the lesson, the actions and words of the other teachers were very comparable. All of the interviewed teachers believed that students learn in response to their adult role models. They maintained that there is a need to model possible resolutions to situations, a need to have students expectations in line with the teacher’s own expectations, and a need to model appropriate socially accepted skills when

interacting with other people. When questioned about role modeling, Kathy noted

[Role modeling is] everything. It is my job as a teacher. It is my role in the community. I need to role model appropriate behaviors, appropriate ways of speaking to another person, appropriate manners. When I mess up, I apologize to the kids.

Comments and Praise

Praise given to students by teachers was a key ingredient of all the observed lessons. While the majority of the praise was verbal, other forms of praise were used to acknowledge student achievements, such as sending a student to the principal's office or to another teacher's room for recognition, and displaying student work in a visible location. In addition, the teachers also sent notes home informing the parents of their child's good accomplishments at school. However, using praise consistently and effectively was a skill that the majority of the teachers felt was an area of weakness. These teachers recognized that they are more apt to contact home over negative actions rather than over positive ones.

The need to balance praise for effort versus praise for accomplishments was also discussed. While the teachers recognized that both are important, some admitted that they struggle with harmonizing the two. Bill added

It is critical that the [student's] effort is acknowledged [by the teacher] and not [just] the product. . . . students sometimes don't understand . . . I do talk with my kids about the fact that we are all different and [about] the fact that effort is more important than the product and that [that effort] is what I am looking for.

All of the teachers were aware of student activities and student accomplishments that took place outside of school and publicly praised their students for those achievements. Instances of this included rodeo results, drumming at a recent pow wow, and helping around the house. Furthermore, friendly teacher-student conversations regarding a new haircut, events at the local carnival, soccer scores, and family activities occurred during observed visits.

When the teachers were asked why they talk to students about the students' daily lives, the consensus was that the teachers believed that teaching involved knowing their students beyond the four walls of the classroom. They felt that the students needed to see that the teacher was interested in their everyday lives and that the teacher was really listening to them. Jeannie supported this:

I want them [the students] to know I'm interested in what they do . . . I know a lot of the people in their families, so when they talk about them, I know who they are and what they are doing . . . they [the students] feel good. They like telling me.

As mentioned previously, when altercations develop between students, teachers generally give the problem back to the students, the individuals who own the problem. While the teachers provided guiding principles for solving disputes among students, they allowed the students to try to find solutions for themselves. However, if a student was struggling, either academically, emotionally, or socially, the teachers moved quickly to provide whatever support was necessary to help resolve the situation. This was particularly true if the struggle was taking place in front of a peer group. Examples of this academic

support included providing the pronunciation of an unknown word while reading and giving clues needed to solve a math problem. In some instances, the student's peers gave the support and guidance.

Emotional and social problems for some students resulted in a time-out, where the student was placed in a location away from the rest of the class, but a location that allowed the student to continue learning by observing the lesson and permitted the teacher to continue to maintain supervision over that student. The teachers asserted that it was important for the student to still be involved in the education that was taking place with the rest of the students.

Promoting Student Self-Esteem

During the observations, only one teacher was heard to tell a student that the answer given by the student was wrong. The other teachers made encouraging remarks such as "that's close," "good try," and "almost". The teachers indicated that they used these more positive comments because they wanted the students to like themselves, to feel good about what they were doing, to accept challenges, to take risks, and to try new things. Being enthusiastic motivators seemed to work well for these teachers. To support learning, they never allow a student to struggle in front of their peers preferring instead to give helpful hints or encouraging other students to provide assistance. Students were often set up for success by being asked a question that the teacher knew the student could answer successfully. The teachers embraced the idea that promoting self-esteem is essential to success.

The teachers perceived that school should be a happy, fun place for both students and teachers. One teacher often used humor to lighten a difficult situation and to help save face for a student by making the situation more

bearable. In fact, this teacher also used humor whenever he made a mistake in front of his class. He felt that teaching should be done with enthusiasm, encouragement, and humor, and that it is important for the teacher to see humor in many situations, to laugh with students, to laugh at yourself and your own mistakes, and to be willing to be laughed at. John remarked, "I think it [humor] goes a long way in helping. I definitely use it a lot. I think kids react so positively to it. It must overlap into other areas."

Sharing Personal Experiences

The teachers introduced aspects of their own family life and their own cultural backgrounds to their students. These interjections varied from short anecdotes about weekend activities to one teacher celebrating the birth of her newborn by bringing the baby into the classroom.

When the teachers were asked why they shared aspects of their personal family activities during lessons and also why they kept up on the daily lives of their students, the consensus was that the teachers felt that they were promoting relaxed communication with and among their students. The teachers perceived that student success relates to being able to learn from each other's experiences, interests, and family backgrounds; becoming familiar with, accepting, and valuing each other's cultural heritage; providing additional experience from the teacher's background; and being seen by the students as people with lives outside of the classroom rather than just teachers at school.

Being Available to Students

In some instances, the school rules, routines, or both prohibited the students from easily accessing the teacher at times other than regular school hours. For example, at one school, students are not allowed in the building

before classes begin in the morning. At another school, the necessity for bus transportation limits student access to their teacher. However, if students need some assistance or someone to talk to, all teachers expressed that they made themselves available because they maintained that it is important to listen to students' ideas, to answer their questions, and to let them know that teachers are there for them.

The teachers of the three older grade classes indicated that they do get involved on a regular basis with students other than those within their own class. For instance, some of these teachers were committed to coaching a variety of school teams or to sponsoring school clubs such as the student council, a chess club, and a computer club. These teachers claimed that it is important for the community to see them in these roles. When discussing why he is involved with students in this manner, John commented, "I think the kids get a great deal out of it. It's my job . . . That's why I am teaching. It's for the students."

First Nations Displays and Instruction

Although the teachers believed that it is important for First Nations students to know their culture and the teachers were aware that First Nations students are visual learners, displays of First Nations materials were only visible during two classroom observations. One of the displays went along with a First Nations unit in the social studies curriculum. Another display of three small First Nations posters located in the corner of the room had to be pointed out by the teacher. This lack of First Nations materials in the classrooms, especially in band schools, was explained by Brenda:

One of the things that we're really struggling with [as teachers] is fitting into what is required of the school at the academic learning [level]. It is a

real priority here to get the kids up to what has become the standard of learning. So the emphasis is on what is expected of them and what they need to know, so that their Native curriculum . . . then takes a back seat. [We] are sort of struggling to get the kids to know, to pull off the grade, and just [to] pull off graduation.

A local First Nations instructor performed all of the teaching of the First Nations culture and language. In all instances, this instructor was not a university-trained teacher but an individual who is recognized by the local First Nations language authority as being capable of teaching the local culture and language. Once recognized by this local authority, British Columbia's Teacher Qualification Service gives the First Nations culture and language instructor teacher certification.

The instruction of the First Nations culture and language program is provided to the students through a pull-out program. Students of First Nations ancestry are permitted to attend the culture and language class in lieu of attending another class. For the older students, this usually means missing the French as-a-second-language program. At no time, do non-First Nations students, or the teachers, have any opportunity to attend and learn about the First Nations culture and language. If any of the classroom teachers teach a component of First Nations studies, it is done as part of the curriculum, particularly in grade four where Native people of Canada is a social studies curriculum requirement.

The culture and language class schedules at all of the schools where observations took place were not conducive to allowing the regular classroom teachers to learn about their First Nations students' language and culture. As

indicated, the culture and language classes in all of the schools consisted of pull-out programs taught by a First Nations specialist, which were not compulsory for all students. This situation required that each homeroom teacher remain in the home class, isolated from learning the culture and language of the students. This policy also resulted in the majority of non-First Nations students, as well as some of the First Nations students, being isolated from learning the culture and language of their pull-out peers.

John explained, "When I have approached First Nations curriculum, I'm comfortable but also cautious because I don't think [that] I have the knowledge base to [teach the culture and language in the regular classroom]." Bill remarked, "Unless it's relevant to a subject, then I don't . . . automatically go out and include it [First Nations content] in whatever I am doing, at the time, just to include it."

Although the teachers do not formally teach the First Nations culture and language, they verbalized their respect for all cultures including that of the First Nations people. These teachers tend to view each culture as having its own set of characteristics that need to be respected and understood. They perceived that it is only with this respect and understanding that they could successfully instruct students from other cultures, including those of First Nations ancestry.

Religious Beliefs

None of the teachers formally taught religion as part of their classroom curriculum. However, they all expressed respect for religious beliefs of different cultures, not just that of the First Nations people. The teachers who are employed in the band schools mentioned that the First Nations beliefs, which are based around nature, are interwoven in everything they teach. Instead of a traditional

Christian Christmas celebration, they key in on ceremonies and activities that are important to the First Nations community. However, no activities relating to the First Nations community were observed during the class visits. One teacher expressed concern for not having a sufficient knowledge of the local First Nations culture to do justice in teaching it or in incorporating it into the curriculum. In fact, all of the teachers, whether they taught in the public system or the band schools, concentrated on teaching the curriculum as mandated by the British Columbia Ministry of Education rather than incorporating local heritage into their lessons.

All of the teachers expressed that they personally hold some form of religious belief. They maintained that some form of energy exists between individuals which influences how we react, feel or relate to others. Two teachers hold the belief that we are all part of a larger system and that spiritually a connection exists between every person and that who we are is governed by this inter-connection.

Respect in the Class

Two modes of thought pertaining to respect in the classroom seem to exist. The first was held by one of the teachers whose view of respect centers on classroom mores. This teacher looked for evidence of these expectations in the students: raising their hands to answer questions, displaying respect for those who are talking by remaining quiet and paying attention, exhibiting pride in their work by doing the best that they are capable of, and using the expressions of 'please' and 'thank you' at appropriate times.

The second mode was displayed by the remaining five teachers who deal with respect in more holistic terms. Although they embraced the idea that

classroom behavior and expectations are important, these teachers also believed that respect is a concept that goes beyond the four walls of the classroom. For these teachers, respect means accepting the First Nations students for who they are, honoring their view of the world, developing reciprocal relationships with others, and helping them exercise responsibility over their own lives. They cultivate in their students the conscious feeling that respect needs to exist in everyday life, whether in school or out in the community. Evidence of this occurred when the teachers insisted on the students using 'I' statements, especially when dealing with conflict. The teachers taught the students to solve problems by talking directly to the people involved, thereby, showing respect to others and to their feelings. They wanted students to perpetuate a sense that we are all here together and that relationships between class members, like family members, need to be based on mutual respect. In place of the word 'respect', teachers used vocabulary that was familiar to the students, such as 'friendly' or 'polite'. Teachers embedded the practice of being respectful by incorporating continuous conversations about respecting others and expecting the same back, emphasizing that respect needs to be earned. Teachers role-modeled respectful practices themselves or practiced walking-the-talk, being careful not to do anything that may show disrespect toward an individual.

Classroom Management

The establishment of classroom rules was quite consistent among all of teachers. The students were allowed some ownership into the establishment of the rules but the teachers tended to know what rules they preferred the students to select and the teachers guided them in their selections. In all instances, the rules addressed the feeling aspect of getting along with one another, rather than

simply outlining which physical actions are or are not acceptable. For instance, Bev's number one rule dealt with being respectful while Brenda's number one rule concentrated on every child feeling both happy and safe. This trend continued with Kathy whose two basic rules include not hurting the feelings of others and being respectful toward the rights of others.

Only one classroom visibly displayed these rules. When asked why, the teachers indicated that they exhibited the rules only at the beginning of the school year and removed them as the year progressed when the students showed a working understanding of them. The teachers suggested that the students needed to have clear expectations about what was required of them in completing course work and in acceptable behavior. They also indicated that students needed regular feedback on their performance with emphasis being on positive comments. To ensure student comprehension of these rules, the rules were kept simple and were taught through role playing and practicing. If possible, whenever a rule was broken, natural consequences were used to teach rather than to punish the child. Teachers were emphasizing successes rather than failures.

Jeannie was more reactive when dealing with the rules and playground problems. During an observation, she failed to set the standards of what was acceptable behavior on the playground and spent considerable time dealing with individual situations as they arose. Similarly, classroom routines, such as what students should do once they completed their assignment, were not firmly established. This resulted in her spending more time dealing with the incident rather than on the task of teaching. The other teachers tended to have systems in place that allowed them to be more proactive. Examples of these systems

included the establishment of processes for collecting homework; students knowing that when a problem with another student developed that they had to deal directly with that student before involving the teacher; teachers teaching students how to deal directly with another student if a problem arose; teachers outlining each day's activities verbally, in writing, or both; teachers emphasizing expected behavior before the students became immersed in a project or participated in an activity; and teachers openly praising students for exhibiting appropriate behavior.

As evident by the level of student comfort displayed both in the class and in the school environment, it was obvious that emotional safety was also addressed. These teachers were aware that there were other factors in the daily lives of their students that could impact their learning and behavior at school. Frequently the teachers interacted with their students. They felt that this interaction allows them to learn a great deal about each student, and permits them to predict and circumvent problems before they actually occur. These teachers did not want to make a difficult situation worse. In one class, misbehaving students feel safe enough to come forward to discuss the situation with the teacher and deal with the consequences.

Meeting the Individual Student's Needs

All of the teachers stipulated that meeting the individual student's needs is a vital component of their teaching beliefs. These teachers wanted all students to have success every day and to know that each one of them is capable of learning. Yet, all of the teachers taught the same concept to the class as a whole. Hence, how they managed to meet individual student's needs varied from teacher to teacher. These differences may be the result of the variation in the

grades taught (i.e. primary or elementary), the particular teacher training program that was attended, or the system in which the teacher was employed. For instance, in a split primary class, Jeannie spends more time with the younger student group because she wants to ensure that they have a firm grasp of the basics. She feels that when students have a grasp of the basics, their self-concept improves. When necessary, this teacher modifies the lesson expectations for the younger or the less capable students. She wants them to achieve to the full extent of their ability level.

Bev, teaching a primary split class, begins at the simple level and progresses toward the more difficult concepts. This teacher not only modifies the work and learning outcomes but also allows more time to complete the work. Bev is a teacher that wants all of her students to succeed at their academic work.

Teaching a straight primary class, Kathy has the students working at their individual ability levels, yet likes to challenge the students every once in a while with difficult questions. Kathy's rationale is that, even if the students are not able to formulate a correct answer, the process of getting there causes the students to extend their thinking beyond what they normally do. She believes that students need to be challenged to become independent thinkers and achievers and that the effort that they put in to problem solving needs to be honored. Kathy also utilizes a span of questions so all students have an opportunity to answer successfully. She believes that it is important for a teacher to inspire effort in low achievers.

Brenda, teaching an intermediate class, uses manipulatives when beginning a new concept. Students are encouraged to work at their own pace with expectations established according to the individual student's ability level.

She believes that her students learn more naturally when education is multi-sensory, applicable, and when the students are actively involved.

Also working in an intermediate class, Bill instructs the same concept to all students and then adjusts the lesson expectations to meet the needs of each student. During some lessons, academic and social problems are resolved by having the students work in pairs. These pairs are not stagnant but change according to the purpose of the lesson. Students can share their knowledge and can help each other achieve. Bill feels that asking a student to assist a peer who is having difficulty helps build a student's self-esteem. Bill did a particularly good job of role modeling expectations. When he wanted students to exhibit good listening skills, he role-played a situation requiring the students to identify both the good and the bad listening skills. He then entrusted them with the responsibility of making the decision about how they were going to listen, letting them take the consequences for their own decisions.

John also teaches the initial lesson to the entire class and then adjusts the work expectations for different students. The learning environment in John's class is so safe that students have taken on the responsibility of informing the teacher that, on occasion, they require their workload to be reduced. John feels that the students need to see themselves as responsible people and that it is important for the teacher to give them opportunities to learn how to solve their problems, trusting them to be responsible, and to give them experiences in making decisions on their own. Reduced workloads are allowed, not only for the academically challenged student, but also for any student who is involved in activities outside of school. In instances where these activities cut into evenings

or weekend time, the students are allowed to reduce their class workload by speaking directly to John. John explained

After the initial lesson is done . . . the individual [student's] needs are met. . . . If they need the work cut back, I'll go over to the individual that requires that. I prefer [that] they come to me rather than me go to them. They are given the opportunity to come and deal with me and tell me that they are having trouble and that they need things cut back, or that they have a lot of work [outside of school] today.

Student Success

The definition of student success, as outlined by Haberman (1995c), requires that each learning situation and each student be looked at individually. Hence, success was interpreted differently by each teacher. For one teacher, success meant fitting the learning into what the students presently know. This teacher believes that First Nations students are lacking background information which affects their academic success. She feels that to be successful with First Nations students the teacher must link the new learning to what the students already know. For instance, the procedure of obtaining a supply of water in ancient Rome was made more relevant to the students when the teacher compared that method to the system that the local ranchers use in obtaining water for their cattle and crops.

Another teacher indicated that student success relates to her being aware that First Nations students may not be academically where they should be when they begin school in kindergarten. For this teacher, acceptance of this fact and working with the students from where they are is vital to their success. A third

teacher measured success by whether or not the students are happy in the classroom and whether they feel like they belong.

Bill reiterated that to make students feel successful, work must be provided at their independent academic level. As their teacher, he accepts responsibility for their success or failure. Not only did he stress the need for different learning materials but he also emphasized the need to meet every child's learning requirements through the use of different teaching strategies. For Bill, the key to student success is their ability to read.

John emphasized that different levels of student success exist and are dependent upon each individual child. For John, success goes beyond just the academics. If a child suddenly begins to talk and confides in him as the teacher, he considers such an action as an act of success. He talked about students needing time and space to learn and of him being responsible for helping those students who are struggling. John also realized the need to celebrate success, regardless of how minor the successes may appear to be.

Involvement With Students Outside of Class

All of teachers thought that it is important to be involved with the students outside of class. However, three variables seemed to determine the amount of involvement each teacher had with the students outside of the classroom. First, some schools had rules that limit student access to the teacher before and after school. Second, the school's location resulted in the majority of students having to be bussed. Finally, the grade level that is taught seemed to have a bearing on how involved the teachers were. In general, the teachers who work in the intermediate grades were more involved than those who were teaching in the primary grades. Most of this involvement comprised of coaching

school teams. Bill sponsored the school student council. In all instances, the teachers included students from other classes in these activities.

The teachers agreed that it is important for students to see them from a different frame of reference, to be seen as more than just classroom teachers. Bill accomplished this by coaching a variety of community youth teams containing children of different cultures. However, none of the teachers participated in First Nations community activities.

Student Praise

The teachers agreed that praise is important to student success. This was supported through the observations where a great deal of verbal praise was evident. Other forms of praise that were obvious in their teaching practices include marks or stars on charts, wall exhibits of students' work, and involving the students in displaying their work. Some students received praise by being asked to model and explain their work as examples to the other students. Brenda stated

Student praise is good. . . . so being specific with students and letting them know [that] what they are doing is right and making sure that you always find things in students to praise, in case there are areas where it is difficult to. You find small things to praise to encourage them to do well in an area. Of course, it's for kids who are really good at general things; it's recognition of themselves.

Retention of Students

There was a great deal of discrepancy among the teachers regarding whether or not students should be required to repeat a grade. Two teachers say

outright that they would not retain students. The others indicate that if it were necessary to retain a student, it would be based on the student's low level of maturity. Brenda remarked

When I taught kindergarten, I kept some kids back because of their maturity level. I thought that would be a good thing to do at that level because then they would start in at a more mature level and carry on through. Since I've been here, I have really found that was not necessarily a good idea for people in the families that we were dealing with. What seems to work better is to keep the kids going through with their age level and deal with the maturity level instead.

Three teachers are current with the latest research, which indicates that retention is harmful to the educational development of students. John feels the fear of failure is a reality of life which students need to experience.

Student Expectations

All of the teachers verbally indicated that it is important for students to know the learning expectations and for the teacher to be consistent with those expectations. This was supported during the observations when the teachers used a variety of methods to teach students their expectations. These methods included the role modeling of expectations by the teacher or the students, listing the expectations on the board, verbal instructions, displays of appropriate work, and hands-on experiences. This was true for all teachers except one, whose words and actions seemed to be contradictory. This teacher stated expectations are important but then constantly failed to provide those expectations to her students. Hence, students were required to do the work over, in some cases several times, before it was considered acceptable. This teacher, rather than

looking at her instructional practices to determine what she is not providing to the students, places the blame on the students for not applying their best effort. It is important to note that this teacher was secondary-trained and that her method of delivery of the expectations for secondary students may be consistent with her training, but it was not effective for the primary students that she was teaching for the first time.

The teachers who outline their expectations make the extra effort to teach those expectations to the students and, if necessary, reinforce the concept by reteaching it. In these classes, when time was spent in the beginning to teach the expectations, the learning outcomes seemed to be better achieved.

Outlining Changes in Routines

All of the teachers indicated that it is important for students to know the day's routine. This was done in a variety of ways including a schedule on the side board, a verbal account of what is planned for the day, or by just being extremely consistent in their everyday routines. In all instances, any changes were outlined to the students well in advance of the event. All participants believed that students are more successful when they are not surprised but given ample time to prepare for any changes.

Teacher Circulation Within the Classroom

All of the teachers perceived that circulating throughout the room, while students are working independently or in small groups, is extremely beneficial to the students. They indicated that it is an important element in determining who is on-task, developing positive rapport, maintaining control in a proactive manner, and connecting with students on a daily basis. This was supported during all of the observations except for one; that teacher's circulation is sporadic

and appears to be unnatural for her. In fact, as this teacher became familiar with having the researcher in her room, more time was spent sitting at her desk and directing the students from there.

Student Leadership Opportunities

All of the teachers provided some opportunities for students to take on leadership roles. These roles ranged from being the class monitor, or teacher helper, to collecting and distributing papers. There were more leadership opportunities in the primary grades because students individually rotate into the role of teacher helper. As the teacher helper, their duties involved recording the daily temperature, leading the class in reciting the alphabet, counting the days of the month, taking slips to the office, and assisting in the distribution and collection of objects such as crayons and paper. In the intermediate grades, there were more leadership opportunities for students outside of the classroom. These included refereeing noon-hour house league games, participating in extra-curricular activities, and being involved in student council. In some instances, another teacher, other than their classroom teacher, provided these leadership opportunities to the students.

Staff Relationships

All teachers agreed that a supportive staff is essential to their success as teachers and to the success of their students. When speaking about what constituted a supportive staff, they all mentioned the role played by the principal. They indicated that the principal needs to have an understanding of what takes place in the classroom, needs to protect them from outside factors that could take their focus away from the students, and needs to be a role model to the entire school body. Bev remarked

It is really important to feel that you can lean on somebody for support if you need to and vice versa, [and] that you can sit down and talk about the problem, whether it is one-to-one or at a staff meeting. Having a principal who understands where you are coming from and is willing to listen to you, helps.

Teacher Motivational Factor

The teachers outlined that they are not in the profession of teaching for the money, feeling that the pay is adequate. Instead, they chose the field of education because they each felt that they had something to offer the students.

Essential Components for Student Success

As viewed through the eyes of these teachers, the essential components for student success are not based solely on what the students themselves can do and are not dependent on what external influences can provide. Instead, the teachers are consistently looking for ways that they themselves can change to increase student success. For Bev that meant staying current with the recent research. Of importance to Kathy is the use of all of her senses to gain the bigger picture of her students. Developing an environment that is secure, one in which students feel safe and trusted, is essential for Bill. He summarized this in terms of creating a healthy self-esteem:

When I think of self-esteem I try to distinguish between positive self-esteem and what I like to think of as healthy self-esteem. There are a lot of kids out there that think they are wonderful and great at everything, and that is not always a positive thing. I mean, there are gang leaders out there who believe that they are absolutely wonderful and they have no problem with a positive self-esteem. They're wonderful. They have a

group of kids following them and everything is positive to them. But, that is not healthy self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem is one . . . where you know you can make errors and you know that that's okay . . . I think that one of the roles of the teacher is to show that it is okay to make mistakes and that should not impact self-esteem. . . . With a healthy self-esteem you can look at a mistake as something you are going to grow with. . . . It's a matter of understanding that these aren't really mistakes so much as learning experiences. Your own healthy self-esteem can lead to better learning.

Sufficient planning and providing opportunities for humor were essential requirements of John. Brenda embraced the idea that teachers need to satisfy the students' basic needs, including a sense of belonging, if the students are to be successful. Brenda also indicated that she likes to use fun as a motivational factor.

Thoughts on Teachers Working Successful With First Nations Students

Initially, when these teachers were asked to explain why others would consider them to be successful at teaching First Nations students, they identified good teaching attributes that they feel all teachers should have: being consistent, having a caring attitude, having a good rapport with students, developing structured lessons, using sound instructional techniques, and developing a feeling of trust. After identifying these initial attributes, the teachers moved beyond the generic characteristics to look within themselves to discover why the First Nations students they teach are successful. These internal attributes included using all of their skills to ensure that all students succeed; building emotional and personal bridges which allow students to reach their potential;

having a passion for teaching causes one to do well; remaining knowledgeable by being a life-long learner, constantly asking questions and seeking knowledge; giving the students time: "we owe it as adults to listen as much as we ask them to listen to us"; meeting their needs regardless of who they are; and doing whatever is necessary to help the students.

Examining the Data

For the purpose of this study, the characteristics and practices were either crafted into the four key attributes identified within the research literature for teachers who successfully worked with minority students or they were examined independently. Firstly, the analysis of the attribute of building relationships will be examined. It was determined that building relationships embraces the following characteristics and practices: dealing with minority groups; recognizing the students' culture and background; beliefs about working with special needs students; interacting with students which includes role modeling, comments and praise, and promoting student self-esteem; sharing personal experiences; being available to students; and First Nations displays and instruction. Next, the attribute of the teaching of morality containing the characteristics and practices of religious beliefs, respect in the classroom, and classroom management are analyzed. Then the key area of teacher preparation is discussed. Finally, the attribute of classroom pedagogy involving the characteristics and practices of meeting individual student's needs, student success, involvement with students outside of class, student praise, retention of students, student expectations, outlining changes in routines, and teacher circulation within the classroom is assessed.

The data which do not fit into the above four identified attributes - student leadership opportunities, staff relationships, teacher motivational factors, beliefs on student success, and the participants' thoughts on teachers who successfully work with First Nations students - are examined separately. The data relating to Haberman's *Star Teacher Selection Interview* are analyzed separately at the end of this section.

Building Relationships

The present study supports Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990) who emphasize that the relationship that exists between the student and the teacher is a paramount ingredient to the success of First Nations students. Schlosser (1992) identifies cultural knowledge and an understanding of student development as essential in the development of strong relationships.

The attribute of building relationships tends to be intertwined throughout the entire teaching and learning process and this makes it awkward to separate out from the other attributes. However, the research data did reveal that all of the teachers exhibited similar characteristics and practices in the attribute of building relationships. One such characteristic and practice is that all of the teachers viewed their students as individuals, each with an individual set of needs and academic requirements. Teachers met individual student needs by either teaching a variety of core lessons or by teaching the same core lesson to all students and adjusting the learning outcomes for individuals. Another way that the teachers met individual needs was to learn about the student's environment and heritage. "There needs to be an understanding of the environment from which they come, in order to develop the program, within the school, that is appropriate for them as much as possible," states Bill.

Students were made to feel important when the teachers' expressed interest in their activities outside of the classroom. In some instances, that interest was transmitted through praise for an accomplishment outside of the school setting. In others, it was as simple as recognizing that a student had received a hair cut, new clothes, or a new sibling. This activity was complemented by the teachers when they regularly interjected aspects of their personal lives or their family activities into the classroom environment.

Relationships were further developed through role reversal. It was frequently observed that the students took on the teacher's role, by helping their peers with a difficulty, explaining to the teacher a new piece of knowledge that they had just discovered, or educating the teacher in their culture and language.

Student comfort within the classroom environment was enhanced by the teacher's utilization of verbal praise for accomplishments and by the teacher's use of non-threatening statements that signaled to students that they needed to get back on task. Answers to questions were never referred to as being wrong. Instead, students received words of encouragement to try again or were provided with clues to formulate the desired response. The teachers did not allow the students to struggle too long for an answer. In this accepting environment, students were willing to take risks and mistakes became learning opportunities.

The teachers used a variety of communication techniques with the students' homes: notes home, phone calls, use of the student agenda book, being available to parents before or after school, and attending evening family functions sponsored by the school. However, the teachers did not view their communication with the home or the community as being a strong component of

their teaching repertoire and they felt that it was an area that they needed to strengthen. It is interesting to note that none of these teachers attended community functions sponsored by the First Nations communities.

Recognizing the Students' Culture and Background. Throughout the literature, the term 'culturally congruent' is used when discussing cultural knowledge. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes culturally congruent as alterations that a teacher makes to more closely resemble the speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures of the students. Pease-Alvarez and Espinosa (1991) support this when they write about teachers utilizing teaching strategies that build on the interaction patterns of the culture of the student.

Little data is evident indicating that the teachers, in the present study, modified their teaching toward the participation structures of First Nations students. Yet, the need for a holistic approach to teaching First Nations students was expressed by Brenda: "You need to show acceptance of their reality and information base." What Brenda addressed is the need for teachers to place what is being taught into the context of what the student already knows. She further remarked, "Don't deny them [First Nations students] their own reality in the hopes of giving them a better one." Another teacher indicated the importance of being aware of such First Nations traits as not making direct eye contact.

Grant and Gillespie (1993) embrace the need for effective teachers to cash in on the cultural capital that their students bring to school, learn the history and culture of their First Nations students, and develop a good community network of educational support. Tharp and Yamauchi (1994) express concern regarding the misfit between the formal teaching and learning processes that takes place in

the typical classroom, and the teaching and learning processes of the non-western minority students in their home and community.

Attempts to become more informed about the local First Nations history and culture were not readily evident during the observations. However, it is noted that all of the teachers are well established in each of their schools and are familiar with the families and community members within the school's catchment area. Although none of the teachers attended functions sponsored by the First Nations community, they did attend and interact with community members during after-hour school sponsored activities.

The public schools have hired First Nations support workers to liaise between the school and the First Nations homes. However, the participants employed by the public school system indicated that they preferred to contact the homes directly themselves. During the social studies unit on Native Canadians, a grade four teacher asked the First Nations students to provide the rest of the class with information on the local tribal structure and the band chiefs. The teacher also called upon the students' experiences to assist other students when they were doing First Nations art projects. It is easier for the teachers of band schools, enrolling all First Nations students, to incorporate the First Nations history and culture into their classrooms. Examples include a trip into the bush to learn about the local mushrooms and to pick leaves to make Indian tea.

The First Nations culture and language instructional program at all of the schools comprised of a pull-out system where First Nations students were separated from the rest of the students and their classroom teacher. This seems unfortunate for all stakeholders: Not only were the non-First Nations students and the classroom teacher unable to attend these sessions, but the First Nations

students missed the opportunity to share their heredity, traditions, and culture with their non-First Nations peers and their regular classroom teacher.

Bill expressed beliefs that students need to develop a healthy self-esteem. This paralleled the thoughts of Gale (1991) who maintains that the Native student needs to be a contributing, significant member of a family, have a positive self-esteem, and relate meaningfully with a significant adult. In developing a healthy self-esteem, Bill implied that a student perceives acceptance within a large family, the class, and, thus, feels secure enough to attempt tasks unfamiliar to him. In attempting unfamiliar tasks, the student knows that the significant adult, the teacher, will view any mistake, not as an error but as a teachable moment or a learning opportunity. As a result, the students develop healthy attitudes about their accomplishments and are willing to contribute to their own learning process and that of others.

Gale (1990) acknowledges the need for teachers and students to share background information and that, in doing so, a feeling of trust will ensue which, in turn, leads to a greater sharing of cultural knowledge. All of the teachers interjected stories and activities about their own families and their own life experiences into the daily classroom activities. For Jeannie, this included bringing her newborn into the classroom. Brenda regularly spoke about her daughter who had the same name as one of the students and who participated in similar sports activities that her students were interested in. Kathy, an ardent quilter, involved her kindergarten students in a quilting activity. When asked why interjecting personal interests into the lesson was important, the participant consensus was that there was a need for the students to know the teacher as a person who had other interests and activities outside of the classroom.

The teachers expected that this personal sharing was a two-way communication. Not only did they share their personal experiences but they inquired about the students' family activities and interests, and expected the students to share from their personal family and life experiences, as well. The teachers regularly commented on something one of the students achieved on the weekend, on the different clothes that a student was wearing for the first time, or on how well they were performing with the learning assistant teacher. The teachers showed a genuine interest in the students' lives outside of the regular classroom and, in doing so, students seem willing to speak openly to the teacher and their classmates about their accomplishments and concerns.

The Teaching of Morality

Marshall (1996) states that "good teachers have a deep-seated concern and respect for the students in the classroom" (p. 3). In support of this, Ornstein (1995) and Haberman (1995b) proclaim that exemplary teachers build trust and mutual respect and use words like caring, respect, and trust to describe their actions which allows them to serve as successful role models.

Five of the participants took a holistic approach to dealing with the issue of respect. For these teachers, respect was a concept that went beyond the four walls of the classroom. It was a conscious feeling that they wanted the students to experience in all aspects of their lives, both in the school and in the community. To develop this conscious feeling for respect, the teachers used respectful language at all times, fostering a feeling that the class family, which included the teacher and the students were all in this together, insisting on the students using 'I' statements when dealing with a conflict, and returning the

problems and concerns back to the children for them to deal with on their own with teacher guidance.

When questioned about classroom rules, the word respect was referred to by all of the teachers. Some of them referred to respect as their number one classroom rule, while others included it in a conglomerate of important elements necessary within the classroom. These teachers were proactive in promoting the classroom rules: They actively taught and practiced the rules before an infraction took place. Whenever an infringement of the rules occurred, they referred the violator back to the rules and had that student explain what was done inappropriately and why it was inappropriate. This same process held true for student safety. The teachers were proactive in explaining safety procedures, establishing the ground rules before students were allowed to partake in an activity.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation involves the use of university course work and student teacher practicums to increase teacher knowledge in both the areas of generic knowledge and student developmental needs. All of the teachers indicated that their teacher training involved the standard courses with no special emphasis placed specifically on the teaching of First Nations students. They felt that their teacher training did not adequately prepare them for the jobs that they are presently involved with and that they had to learn about teaching First Nations students while on the job.

Of the six teachers, five have professional teaching certificates that required the completion of four or five years of university. The other teacher, who is teaching in a band school, has three years of university courses which

qualifies her for a standard teaching certificate. It should be noted that possession of a standard teaching certificate is no longer acceptable for teaching in the British Columbia public school system. Two of the teachers recently completed the requirements for a master's degree.

None of the teachers indicated that they had planned to teach First Nations students when they began their teaching careers. In fact, the desire for getting a job was more important to them than what their first teaching assignment was. Kathy's words, "I needed a job," or Bill's statement, "I was just looking for a job," sums up how the teachers felt entering their teaching careers.

For five of the six teachers, their present placements were not their first teaching assignments. It was during their first teaching assignment that each of the five encountered, for the first time, a group of students who were from a cultural background different than the one that the teacher grew up in. For four of these teachers, their first teaching assignment was their first encounter with First Nations students and the First Nations community. Bill stated, "I had no contact with native peoples prior to leaving Nova Scotia. Where I grew up in Halifax, there was zero contact. Even at Acadia [University], there was no contact with any native community." Other large groups of students that the teachers met for the first time during their first teaching assignments included a large ESL population from Hong Kong, identified special needs students, and low socioeconomic students.

All teachers indicated that these first experiences provided opportunities for personal growth that helped shape their present beliefs and practices about teaching and working with students. Teachers found that they had come to their

jobs with little knowledge of and appreciation for the First Nations community life. Bill remarked

It wasn't until I think I matured a bit . . . after leaving [the First Nations community] and then coming back . . . knowing [and] accepting my place and enjoying my place in the community. I enjoyed playing hockey. I enjoyed learning about things that I would otherwise not have learned about outside of a native community.

Bev, for whom this was her first teaching assignment, got into teaching late in life. She sensed that some aspects of her age helped make First Nations students successful in her classroom: her personal life experiences that she brings into the classroom and her maturity in dealing with the bureaucracy of the band's education system.

Classroom Pedagogy

Knapp, Turnbull, and Shields (1990) argue against the establishment of generic rules that are established at the beginning of the year and that remain static for the remainder of the school year. They encourage teachers to establish ground rules, early in the school year but that over time control is maintained by developing interesting and challenging academic activities set at the appropriate levels.

The participants emulated this research by establishing and teaching appropriate class rules at the beginning of the school year. These rules were initially posted within the room and taught at the beginning of the year. However, as the year progressed the rules became background standards that were only referred to as a reminder to get an off-task student back on track.

Craig (1992) refers to the need of establishing an environment that was consistent, predictable, safe, and contained a sense of purpose. Teachers interested in the success of children of violence need to interject the experience of competence and not failure into their lessons, which are designed to meet the students' needs for predictability and consistence routines. Rhodes (1988), speaking specifically about teaching First Nations students, emphasizes the need for an environment that is kept light and positive through the use of humor. He states that teachers need to be continuously observing the students, looking for what works and changing what is not working.

The repertoire of all of the participants contained consistency, safety, humor, and being aware of, and willing to change, what isn't working. The teachers began each day by outlining the day's activities, letting the students know about deviations from the regular daily routine. Their justification in following this process was because they felt that the students like consistency without surprises and that this process kept all class members informed. All of the teachers used some form of humor. John often used it to help a student save face and to keep the class atmosphere one in which students felt safe to take chances. Kathy spoke about using all of her senses when she taught. She felt that only by using all of her senses could she determine whether a student was struggling with a concept, or learning and enjoying the experience.

The need for success, as referred to by Craig (1992), was established when the teachers taught the same core lesson to all students. A practice that they maintained did not center out low achievers but made them feel like full participants in the class. To help struggling students succeed, the teachers adjusted the lesson's follow-up activities and utilized the services of various

out-of-the-class support.

Bill summed up the participants' concepts, and Alderman's (1990) summation that teachers need to convert mistakes into teachable moments, when he talked about the development of a student's healthy self-esteem. According to Bill, students develop a healthy self-esteem when they realize that making mistakes is a normal ingredient to the learning process that needs to be fostered by all teachers. By using positive words of encouragement or supplying struggling students with clues rather than outright stating that an answer was wrong, gave the students the message that it was all right to take chances and make mistakes.

Singer (1996) advocates a constructivist model of teaching where teachers need to build on what students already know. This model is reflected in the participants' beliefs and summarized by Brenda who talked about not denying students their own reality in the hope of replacing it with a better one, based on the teacher's education and culture. The teachers consistently spoke of working with the knowledge that the students already have and referring all new knowledge back to what the students already know. Chances of student success were enhanced by participants role modeling expected learning and by using whole group participation when introducing new concepts or reinforcing old ones. Sternberg, Okagaki, and Jackson (1990) supported this when they stressed that concepts should be built upon the students' prior knowledge, and that new concepts be taught and practiced in group activities.

The literature does not specifically acknowledge the importance that student leadership opportunities played in student success. This study's data indicates that the participants did not consciously provide leadership

opportunities to the students. Occasionally the teachers allowed students to assume leadership roles. For example, the primary teachers had a weekly special student. This special student was in charge of changing the date, leading the class in counting, taking the outside temperature, and being the class messenger. The intermediate teachers permitted students to distribute and collect books and assignments. At times, intermediate students assumed the responsibility of organizing and refereeing noon hour house games. At one school, they were responsible for the formation of a students' council.

Star Teacher Selection Interview Results

In order to see how the teachers who worked successfully with First Nations students compared to the data relating to star teachers of children in poverty, the participants were interviewed using Martin Haberman's (1991) *Star Teacher Selection Interview*. It was anticipated that if there is a close correlation between the results, then the *Star Teacher Selection Interview* could be used when hiring teachers who would be working directly with First Nations students or, at the very least, that the *Star Teacher Selection Interview* could identify areas of weaknesses in teachers who are already working with First Nations students.

Haberman's interview consists of six two-part questions and one three-part question. According to the answer given, a ranking from zero to three is assigned. Therefore, the highest possible score for any individual is forty-five. Based on the interview results, participants are placed into one of four quadrants. A score of between forty and forty-five would place them in the "A 'Star'" quadrant. A score of between thirty and thirty-nine places the participant in the "B High" quadrant. Scoring between fifteen and twenty-nine would give the participant a "C High Average" quadrant placement. A "D Low Average"

quadrant placement is given to any individual scoring between one and fourteen.

According to Haberman's four quadrant scale, all of the participants recorded scores in the top two quadrants, A and B. Two of the participants ranked in the "A 'Star'" quadrant and the other four in the "B High" quadrant (p.13). A person in the "A 'Star'" quadrant "is 'with it.' Is able to implement advice and/or act on [their] own plans. These individuals start out as 'Stars'" (p. 13). A person in the "B High" quadrant "is able to conceptualize about teaching and is sensitive to the purposes of activities, but has difficulty implementing ideas. These individuals start out as 'Hesitant' or High" (p. 13).

Of Haberman's questions, the ones receiving the highest scores would indicate that the teachers who successfully work with First Nations students would "persist in trying to resolve a seemingly unending problem" (Haberman, 1995d, p. 4). Their answers indicated that they "believe that such persistent creativity and problem solving behavior is a normal expectation of the daily work of the teacher" (p. 4).

Participant answers also indicated that they would protect their students from the bureaucracy of the system. These teachers would be persistent in pursuing a belief, or concept, they felt would be of benefit to their students. Yet, in doing so, they would ensure that their students were protected from any bureaucratic battles that took place within the school "by taking responsibility for stopping an activity" (Haberman, 1991, p.6) and not shifting the blame to another party.

Haberman's questions that deal with teacher burnout and preventative methods to teacher burnout solicited the weakest responses from all of the

participants. Their overall responses would indicate that, as a group, they did not understand that teacher burnout was caused by dealing with the bureaucracy and that “genuine caring about pupils places a continuing burden of responsibility on teachers to deal with irrational authority” (Haberman, 1991, p. 7). Further, the participants failed to indicate that the solution to teacher burnout was a supportive staff who collaborated and provided “a support group that works with others in seeking school change” (p. 8).

These results would indicate that all of these teachers would be successful at teaching children in poverty. However, the results do not indicate whether star teachers of children in poverty would be successful in working with First Nations students. Haberman’s interview questions fail to account for the cultural differences within a traditional urban school and the holistic culture which exists within a First Nations community.

Summary

In this chapter, the data arising from the interviews and observations of six teachers who successfully worked with First Nations students was organized and analyzed into key characteristics and practices. Through this analysis process, it was determined that most of the characteristics and practices of teachers who successfully worked with First Nations students fit into the four key areas for teachers who successfully worked with minority students: building relationships, the teaching of morality, teacher preparation, and classroom pedagogy. Other characteristics and practices, not highlighted in the literature, but which play a role in the success of these teachers were also examined. Finally, the participants were analyzed using the Haberman’s (1991) *Star Teacher Selection Interview* for star teachers of urban students.

All of the participants were experienced teachers who have taught in the same location for at least the past two years. For all but one teacher, this was not their first teaching assignment. Prior to their present teaching assignment, each of these teachers encountered a minority group for which they had no previous experience and for which their teacher training had not prepared them.

All of the participants viewed each class member as an individual student with unique needs and differences. The participants expressed that these needs and differences are the results of the environment in which each of the students live. Therefore, to successfully educate the students, there was a need for the teachers to understand those environments. Although the participants did not attend any First Nations cultural activities within the community, they did express and exhibit respect toward the First Nations culture and the First Nations community.

Throughout the research, praise and positive reinforcement was given to all students, which helped create a warm and safe classroom environment. Within this environment, the teachers recognized mistakes as teachable moments that fostered student growth. The participants further developed a safe classroom environment by role modeling behavioral expectations and learning outcomes in a setting that incorporated both humor and support.

Whenever conversations of student success took place, the participants moved quickly from looking at outside factors to examining what they themselves could do to ensure the success of their First Nations students. This self-examination included such aspects as using all of their senses when teaching students, being aware of their out-of-school activities, and being knowledgeable about the students' family members and community events.

Based on Haberman's (1991) *Star Teacher Selection Interview*, all of these participants ranked in the top two of Haberman's four quadrants and would therefore be ranked as either an "A 'Star'" or "B High" teacher (p. 13). This would indicate that these six teachers could be star teachers of urban children in poverty.

Chapter Five presents implications and recommendations resulting from this study. As well, topics are proposed for further research.

Chapter Five: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

"School success for Aboriginal students remains a top priority for the Ministry and the education system. A major focus within this priority is on achieving success, especially in literacy, at a very early age" (V. Hutchingson, personal communication, June 6, 1999). In an attempt to improve the academic success of First Nations students, the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training (MoEST) has introduced three new programs: First Nations Cultural Awareness, First Nations Language Programs, and First Nations Support Services (MoEST, 1998). To aid in the integration of relevant First Nations content into the curriculum, MoEST has also published a new *First Nations Integrated Resource Package* (IRP), the *First Nations 12* curriculum package, and a book entitled *Shared Learnings: Integrating BC Aboriginal Content K-10*. To give First Nations people more control over the education of their children, new funding categories targeting First Nations funds have been created requiring an agreement between the school board and local bands before any of these funds can be spent.

To measure the proficiencies of all students throughout the province in the areas of reading and numeracy, the Ministry of Education administers provincial assessments known as the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) every spring to students in grades 4, 7, and 10. The results are interpreted by a panel of educators and are released in the fall. The data results for the 1999-2000 school year indicate that, at all grade levels and in all of the subjects tested, there are

approximately twice as many First Nations students in the province of British Columbia that are “not yet within expectations” in comparison to other students (Student Assessment and Program Evaluation Branch, 1999). The discrepancy between First Nations students and other students for “exceeding expectations” is even greater. It should be noted that the results for all students include the results of the First Nations students; if the First Nations results were removed from the category representing all students, the differences would be even greater. The results highlight the fact that despite the Ministry’s best intentions, additional programs and targeted funding are not meeting the needs of a large number of First Nations students throughout the province of British Columbia.

Research exists to support the evidence that the greatest impact on student success relates to what the teacher does in the classroom (Evans, 1996; Grant, 1989; Haberman, 1995c). In fact, MoEST (1998) acknowledges this research in its own documentation stating that “it is at the level of classroom instruction that the influence on children’s education is greatest (p. 42). Yet, little research has been done to examine what constitutes successful teaching of First Nations students. Therefore, it is imperative that the skills of these teachers be examined and that these findings be used by others to improve the academic success of all First Nations students. It is important to assess the potential for more effective teaching of these students.

Brendtro et al. (1990) indicate that there is a need for First Nations students to maintain a balance between their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical quadrants. Goleman (1995), Kessler (2000), and Zohar and Marshall (2000) emphasize the importance of these quadrants. Goleman (1995) maintains that emotional intelligence is more important than an individual’s IQ, and

indicates that self-awareness, self-discipline, and empathy add up to a different way and more important measurement of being smart. Kessler (2000) writes that there are seven gateways to the soul of education that “support school communities in preventing violence and alienation, and producing responsible, caring citizens” (p. 17). Zohar and Marshall (2000) maintain that spiritual intelligence “is what we use to develop our longing and capacity for meaning, vision and value. It allows us to dream and to strive. It underlies the things we believe in and the role our beliefs and values play in actions that we take and the shape we give our lives” (p. cover). This new research endorses the traditional beliefs and practices of the First Nations community, and supports an educational system that emphasizes relationships and the teaching of morality over the acquisition of knowledge.

In reviewing the literature on effective teaching and the results of this study, it is apparent that a number of key characteristics and practices have been identified that apply to the successful teaching of First Nations students. This chapter begins with a summary of this study, followed by a discussion of the findings for each of the key areas for teachers who successfully work with First Nations students. This discussion includes implications for the assigning and hiring of teachers to work with First Nations students. Finally, the conclusion contains recommendations for further study regarding teachers who successfully work with First Nations students.

Summary of the Study

While research exists that examines the role of the teacher working successfully with minority groups, very little research exists that looks specifically at the role of teachers working successfully with First Nations

students. It is recognized that First Nations students are represented in the minority groups discussed in some of the literature. The research indicates that a number of attributes exist that can be applied to the successful teaching of all minority groups. Each of these attributes, building relationships, the teaching of morality, teacher preparation, and classroom pedagogy, will be examined in relation to data collected pertaining to the six teachers in this study.

Literature Overview

Traditionally, all members of the First Nations community are responsible for the education of First Nations children. This educational process was carried out in the most natural setting possible, communicated through trial and observations, and instructed through values, needs, and traditions (Russell, 1993). However, this traditional method of educating First Nations children changed dramatically in the early 1900's with the onslaught of European immigrants to North America. By the mid-19th century, First Nations students were voluntarily being enrolled in the public school system (Kavanagh, 1997). In 1879, large residential schools were built to house and educate First Nations students and, with these schools, the dismantling of the traditional First Nations educational system began (Wilson & Martin, 1997). Since 1946, following a review of the *Indian Act*, the First Nations people have advocated for a greater voice in and more control over the education of their children (Kavanagh, 1997). Although the goal of today's government is to work with the First Nations people in improving the academic success of their children, the provincial exam results indicate that the performance of First Nations students is well below that of non-First Nations students (Student Assessment and Program Evaluation Branch, 1999).

To date, the focus of the government and First Nations people has been on programs and allocation of funds. Limited research has been done to identify what teachers do to make First Nations students successful. The research does indicate that there are many characteristics and practices of successful teachers of minority students and these characteristics and practices can be divided into four main categories of attributes. Each of these categories was examined separately to establish how they applied to exemplary teachers of First Nations students.

Summary of the Methodology

The attributes of teachers who successfully work with First Nations students and their implications on the academic success for First Nations students were investigated using a multi-case study research design. A case study approach, incorporating interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts, was used to examine each of the individual six teachers. In-depth analysis of the data for each teacher was conducted followed by a cross-analysis of the data involving the entire group. This study attempted to address the following questions:

1. What characteristics and practices do teachers, who have been identified as successfully working with First Nations students, exhibit that encourage those students to remain in school, become engaged in educational activities, and promote a desire within the student to learn?
2. Can Haberman's indicators of star urban teachers of children in poverty be used to identify teachers most likely to be successful in working with First Nations students? In addition, are there supplemental indicators for teachers who are successful in working with First Nations students that have not been identified by Haberman's research?

For this study, six teachers, identified as working successfully with First Nations students, were selected as research participants. Selection was based on information received from the supervising principals, their peer group, and central office supervisors.

Implications of the Findings

Educators need to view the First Nations people not solely as a small assembly of intriguing people within our greater society, but as an autonomous segment of the human species. While the First Nations society contains many facets of other cultures, it also embraces elements unique to itself. Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students accentuate this distinctiveness, celebrating and promoting its differences with the First Nations students that they work with and incorporating it into their everyday dealings with these students, their families, and their communities.

The data analysis indicates that while there are many characteristics and practices of teachers who work successfully with First Nations students, all of these characteristics and practices can be categorized according to the literature on the attributes of teachers who work successfully with minority students. The implications of each of these attributes and their relationships to teachers who successfully work with First Nations students are now examined in the following text.

Implications for Building Relationships

To become exemplary teachers who successfully work with First Nations students, educators need to be cognizant of the role played by the environments: first, the environment in which First Nations students live and, second, the environment which they, as the teachers, create within their own classrooms.

Teachers must have an understanding on how the environment in which a student resides affects the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual quadrants of a First Nations student's development. Using this knowledge, teachers can then adjust their teaching procedures to compensate for any lack of reading materials, parental involvement, or other support systems that are necessary for First Nations students to be successful in the educational system. Teachers can no longer believe that First Nations students view the world through the same set of lenses as they do. They need to realize that different cultures see the world in a different way, with each being no better or worse than the other.

The building of relationships is enhanced by educators who realize that, for the First Nations people, education is viewed as a vehicle of great potential to revive, maintain, and enhance their relationship with the natural world. The First Nations perspective of education, based on unique traditions that have been passed down through the generations, needs to involve the experiences that the First Nations student has. They feel that within the school setting, all who come in contact with their children should be working toward that common goal and should be sharing that goal with their children.

By adjusting their classroom procedures to meet the First Nations students' learning needs, the teacher creates a safe and secure environment in which all students thrive: an environment that supports the traditional First Nations belief that students should be allowed to take chances and where mistakes are viewed as teachable moments. The key to developing and maintaining this environment is not to sustain it through sets of rules, but rather by preparing interesting and motivating lessons that are relevant to First Nations

learners: lessons that capture the interest of the students into wanting to learn rather than being a passive participant in the learning process. This interest can only be captured if the teacher knows the students individually, learning their strengths and weaknesses, and presenting lessons in a setting that is safe, in which a mutual bond of trust has developed and in which the First Nations student feels respected.

For these teachers, relationships were not based on the academic process that took place within the classroom but were developed through a sincere effort of cultivating a family spirit with the students. By sharing personal family experiences and showing an interest in the everyday activities of their First Nations students, a bond was built based on trust, respect, and love. It was this bond that allowed the First Nations students to openly approach their teacher for academic or personal help.

Implications for Recognizing the Students' Culture and Background. It is essential to remember that these teachers did not have a total knowledge of their First Nations students' culture but that they did take what they knew and applied it within their classroom setting. When the teachers lacked the knowledge, they sought it out, first from the students themselves, then from the First Nations support worker in the school, or from First Nations community members. By acknowledging the First Nations students' culture, the teacher was teaching the students to have pride in who they are and where they have come from. Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students need to take and make the time to learn about the uniqueness of the First Nations culture and that only as they grow in that knowledge can they grow in their understanding and appreciation of each student's culture: to look at the world through the eyes

of the students and to celebrate a culture which is based upon generations of traditions.

Cultural knowledge is a two-way process: The First Nations students need to share their wealth of knowledge, some of which could be foreign to the teacher, and the teacher has to be open to using that knowledge within the learning process. Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students cash in on the cultural capital that First Nations students bring to the classroom. These teachers find ways of allowing First Nations students to feel valued by promoting their culture and language within the classroom setting.

Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students realize that they have an obligation in assisting the First Nations adults to pass on the uniqueness and the pride of their culture to their children. Involving the First Nations adults and community, these teachers willingly sought out information on the culture and then passed on the information that they learned to the children. Although they do not have total knowledge of the First Nations culture, they were willing to seek out clarity of the knowledge that they already had, and then to pass that knowledge on. Exemplary teachers use First Nations people as a resource of knowledge, inviting them into the classroom and integrating their culture into the school setting.

Ways of exposing non-First Nations teachers to the First Nations language and culture programs within the school must be explored. In doing so, not only do the non-First Nations teachers get a better understanding of the environment from which First Nations students come but, the First Nations students see a teacher who cares about who they, as First Nations students, are. As a result, a feeling of mutual trust will develop: a trust that will encourage First Nation

students to share their cultural experiences and make the teacher more understanding of the difficulties their First Nations students might be experiencing.

Implications for the Teaching of Morality

To the Western culture, education is based on the value of materialism: we pass on information through the education system in order for our children to become independent, self-sufficient, contributing, working adults. Within the First Nations society, education is seen as a way to pass on the knowledge of the lifestyle of Native people. It is viewed as a means of passing on the knowledge that their contemporary lifestyle is founded on the tradition of respect and sharing and that education needs to encompass, with great concern and interest, those concepts that are important to the well-being of the world. The stories and legends that have been passed from generation to generation tell clearly of the unique relationship that these people have always had with the natural environment and that all those that are involved in the school system should help to continue to develop this relationship. The special meanings to their contemporary activities, such as feasting, dancing, singing, and hunting, still exist today and are a relevant part of the education of their children.

Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students view morality as a quality that goes beyond the four walls of the classroom. Therefore, these teachers need to be proactive in promoting a holistic approach to nurturing morality. These teachers need to walk-the-talk at all times. They need to role model expected behaviors, acts of respect, and the ability to build trustful relationships in all aspects of their lives, both at school and in the community. This holistic approach includes taking an interest in the out-of-school lives of

their First Nations students. This interest could be as simple as acknowledging a haircut or a special event that a student competed in, inquiring about berry picking, attending cultural activities, or applauding an accomplishment by a member of the student's family.

Morality incorporates returning problems back to those who really own them: the students. In doing so, teachers who successfully work with First Nations students need to ensure that the students express their concern in the form of 'I' statements. These statements indicate that the problem belongs to the individual and that that individual has the power to address it. Yet, at the same time, the teacher provides expectations on how a situation should be handled and models that expectation throughout their teaching.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

While none of the participants took part in an immersion-type teacher practicum program, they all received an immersion into a society that was culturally or socioeconomically different than that with which they were familiar. Whether they would have been considered an exemplary teacher during their first year of teaching is unknown, but what is known is that this early experience helped shape their beliefs and teaching practices that they employed in their present teaching assignments.

To assist in obtaining the knowledge that would help make teachers work successfully with First Nations students, it is essential that prospective teachers live the experiences, as much as possible, of their First Nations students. While most teacher training programs do not offer a full immersion program, they need to simulate the experience of working in a Native community as closely as possible. This may require short-term practicums in band schools, or a

requirement that student teachers attend and participate in First Nations community events. Teacher training programs need to go beyond the walls of the teaching institute and take the prospective teachers out into the community of the First Nations people. No longer is it acceptable to simply have a learning component entitled 'First Nations studies' and bring in a few 'experts' to give instructions on how First Nations students should be taught. Student teachers need to get out and live the experience themselves; they have to experience the environment that shapes the learning of their First Nations students.

Furthermore, the school district's upper administration needs to provide leadership for the educators who are directly involved with the education of First Nations children. These district leaders need to provide and encourage inservice for teachers, counselors, and principals presently working with First Nations children on a daily basis. This inservice needs to be directly related to the educational needs of the First Nations community. Therefore, it should serve as training sessions into the First Nations culture and way of life as seen through the eyes of the First Nations people. To accomplish this, the First Nations adults need to be the ones that are educating us in their ways. This should be viewed on an ongoing basis, with inservice being provided to new staff in assisting them to become familiar with the background and the needs of the local First Nations students.

Implications for Classroom Pedagogy

While there is much overlap with the attribute of building relationships, the key pedagogical ingredient for student success appears to be the development of a safe and friendly classroom environment, one that fosters lessons designed to promote student success rather than failure. Although it is

acceptable and, in most cases, necessary to establish the basic expectations through a set of class rules, teachers who successfully work with First Nations students use interesting and challenging lessons to control and motivate their students.

Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students need to keep students informed of any changes that might occur within the normal program. While this may not always be possible, exemplary teachers realize that part of a safe classroom environment for students is in not surprising them. This is especially true for at-risk students who need an environment that is predictable, consistent, and free of surprises.

Teachers who successfully work with First Nations students also build on the knowledge base that the student already has, always referring new information back to what the student knows. Included in this is allowing and, in fact, encouraging students to make mistakes which the exemplary teacher turns into teachable moments and which, in turn, develop a healthy self-esteem within the students. A healthy self-esteem develops the belief that it is all right to make mistakes, that mistakes are a necessary component of learning, and that 'I', the student, am not a bad person for making mistakes.

While examining why a student is not successful, teachers who successfully work with First Nations students do not blame outside factors. Instead, they look inward, at themselves, to determine what they, as the teacher, do or do not do. By looking inward to create the necessary changes, these teachers remain persistent in finding a solution that works. They do not give up on a child or turn that responsibility over to others to solve.

A final pedagogical component necessary within teachers who successfully work with First Nations students is that they do not rely on any one sense to discover how a student is doing. Instead, these teachers use all of their senses to read a student, to determine what is working and what is not, to know when to push and when to hold back, and to realize when success is taking place or when the struggle is too great.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the data collected during this research and based on the fact that the majority of teachers working with First Nations students are non-First Nations:

1. Teaching training institutions need to provide opportunities for new teachers to experience the First Nations environment. Ideally, this would involve an immersion component where student teachers would live and work within a First Nations community for an extended period of time. If this is not possible, new students teachers need to complete an extended practicum working within the environment of the First Nations students.

Programs, based on teacher immersion into the First Nations culture and communities, would provide the background information on the traditional First Nations methods of teaching and learning. This immersion would make teachers more aware of the importance that building relationships and that the teaching of morality play in the success of First Nations students in their own culture.

2. School districts need to provide classroom teachers, who are presently employed in their district, with opportunities to participate in the First Nations culture and language classes. This would ideally be achieved by requiring all students, accompanied by their classroom teacher, to attend and participate in

the culture and language classes. Failing this, release time should be provided to allow the classroom teachers opportunities to attend the culture and language classes with their First Nations students.

In doing so, a strong message would be transmitted from the district office and the individual teachers to the First Nations parents and communities: Their culture and language are important components in the educational process. This action is significant to the attribute of building relationships.

3. There is a need to identify secondary students who exhibit the characteristics and practices of teachers who work successfully with First Nations students and to encourage those students to enter the field of education. This recruitment of potential star teachers must begin at the secondary school level. Furthermore, incentives should be provided to these stars to ensure that they work with First Nations students. Incentives could include free housing, interest free student loans, greater professional development allowances, student loan rebates, and moving and transportation assistance.

4. Ways to encourage and enhance communication between the First Nations community and the non-First Nations educators need to be continually devised. The school personnel need to provide home visits on a regular basis, support combined school and community celebrations, involve parents in school activities, and participate in First Nations initiated projects. The educators need to be visible within the communities.

5. MoEST, school districts, and the First Nations community must collaborate their efforts and focus on developing the skills and knowledge of the teachers currently teaching First Nations students. While the current teachers' contract makes it difficult to implement wholesale changes to our present

teaching force, providing training and skill development that is specific to working successfully with First Nations students would help compensate for this. This action will increase the likely success of First Nations students while exemplary teachers are being identified and hired to work specifically with First Nations students.

6. If MoEST and the First Nations community are serious about increasing the success of First Nations students, they must exert whatever pressure necessary to encourage teacher training institutions to offer courses specifically designed to address the learning needs of First Nations learners. An examination of the 2000–2001 university calendars from the three major universities in British Columbia--The University of British Columbia (UBC), Simon Fraser University (SFU), and The University of Victoria (U of Vic)--show that only one course has been designed specifically to address the learning needs of First Nations students. These universities and colleges need to design teacher training courses that specifically address working successfully with First Nation students and that identify the characteristics and practices that are known to work with these students.

7. Educators need to work with First Nations leaders to build and establish respect and trust for all people within the school system. For example, if a First Nations leader offers to work with children on improving their respect toward adults in the community and believes that a similar thing is necessary within the school setting, that leader needs to be encourage to talk with students and to assist them in build bridges of trust and respect for their educators. Education should help First Nations students mature into their own culture and

should assist them in understanding what it means to have a First Nations identity.

8. Potential teachers of First Nations students should be interviewed using the Haberman interview questions. In particular, the questions dealing with being persistent and not giving up on students, and protecting students from bureaucracy and failure, are key questions to ask.

Suggestions for Future Research

In order to address questions arising from the findings in this study, suggestions for future research are offered:

1. All of the teachers in this study were non-First Nations. Teachers of First Nations ancestry, individuals who have lived and experienced the lives of the First Nations students, need to be studied to determine whether they would create different data. Questions related to this may include the following: Could a First Nations teacher from one band become a teacher who successfully works with First Nations students from another band? Could a First Nations teacher successfully work with students from her own band? Could an exemplary First Nations teacher successfully work with students of other cultures?

2. This study is limited to central British Columbia, in the territories of the Thompson and Okanagan bands. There is a need to examine whether these findings are universal to British Columbia, to Canada, and to North America. Are they similar to exemplary teachers teaching outside this area? If they are different, what could cause that difference?

3. The posting, interviewing, and hiring process of teachers working with First Nations students is key to ensure greater student success. Interview

questions need to be researched and developed that will identify potential star teachers of First Nations students as early as possible.

4. Teacher training programs need to be researched to determine which programs promote the identified characteristics and practices of teachers who work successfully with First Nations students.

5. This data was based on interviews and observations of six exemplary teachers of First Nations students. There is a need to expand this research, to observe and interview more teachers who work successfully with First Nations students, so that the skills and knowledge of exemplary teachers can be further dissected and refined, ensuring that First Nations students receive the best possible education available.

This study suggests that if we are to successfully work with First Nations students MoEST, the First Nations communities, and the education system must seriously examine the role played by the classroom teacher. In doing so, the most recent research must be studied and support provided by all of the parties involved.

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